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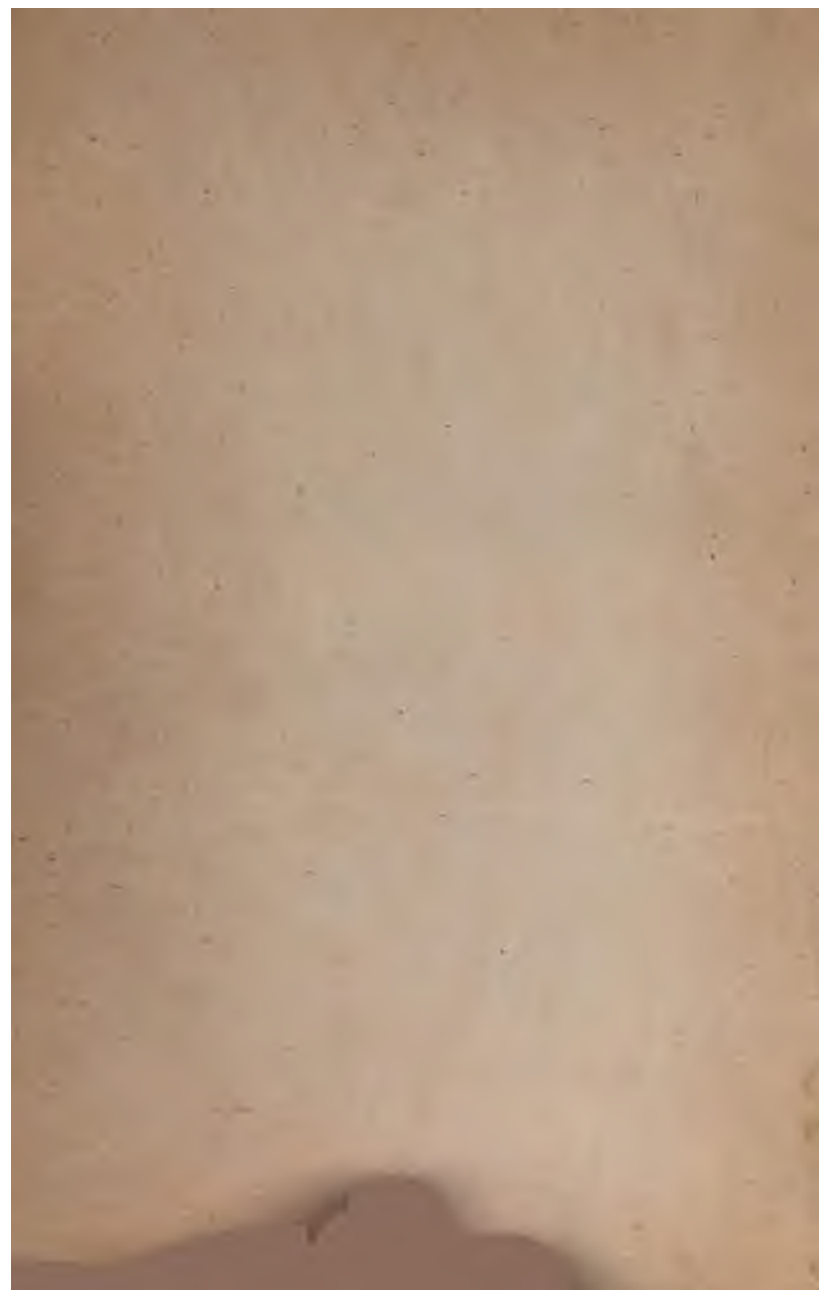




T. C. P. M. M.

1871. C. A. M.

1871. C. A. M.



A STORY

OF

Life on the Isthmus.

BY JOSEPH W. FABENS.

"Whether we lay in the care of the sherd,
Our sleep fell soft on the hardest bed;
Whether we couched in our rough capote,
On the rougher plank of our gliding boat,
Or stretched on the beach, or our saddles spread
As a pillow beneath the resting head,
Fresh we woke upon the morrow.

* * * *

We were of all tongues and creeds:
Some were those who counted beads,
Some of mosque, and some of church,
And some, or I mis-say, of neither;
Yet through the wide world might ye search,
Nor find a motlier crew, nor blither."

Sings of Corvuth.

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TO

Amos B. Corwine, Esq.,

AMERICAN CONSUL AT PANAMA,

For his gallant conduct at the Battle of BUENA VISTA, and the
efficient services rendered his Country and the cause of
humanity in assisting to maintain the Laws at Panama
when an infuriated mob threatened to disturb
the public peace and safety, and destroy
the friendly relations existing between
our Government and the Republic
of NEW GRENADA,

NOT LESS THAN

AS A TOKEN OF BROTHERLY AFFECTION AND REGARD,

THIS VOLUME

Is Respectfully Inscribed.



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P R E F A C E .

"By seizing the Isthmus of Darien," said Sir Walter Raleigh, "you will wrest the keys of the world from Spain." The aspiration of the days of Elizabeth has become the fact of our own. Decrepid old Spain did indeed long since loosen its palsied grasp of this land of wealth and promise; but it was not until Anglo-Saxon enterprise strode over it, that the world saw upon its front the nascent lineaments of a great empire. The wonderful change which has been and is yet to be wrought upon the surface and in the character of the people of this country, will one day form a very interesting chapter in the history of adventurous enterprise. For the present, anything which tends to shed light, however faint, upon a point to which so many eyes are turned in hope and admiration, the writer conceives will not be without its value.

It is not, nevertheless, pretended that the following pages are fraught with any special brilliancy—a modest disclaimer which the reader will perchance think wholly uncalled for under the circumstances—made up of disjointed sketches, drawn roughly enough with such materials as were at hand during rude voyaging, aiming not at any depth of coloring or sentiment, the book will doubtless remind some of those canvas daubings, termed Panoramas, wherein much is seen for a small amount; but which, it is to be hoped, if lacking in those grand touches which only a master can produce, do yet serve in their way to convey to the hurried gazer a sort of floating idea of the beauty or richness of the real scene.

And, furthermore, so trivial are the incidents, so superficial the view of character and life herein displayed—necessarily so where people live only as it were *en passant*, where the depth and earnestness of home-life is entirely wanting—that a much readier pen might well falter in its attempt to give any interest to scenes so barren of material. A land, too,

"Where the rose never blooms on fair woman's wan cheek ;"

about which cluster in the minds of many the most melancholy associations; which travellers approach with dread, and look back upon with trembling; has rather too strong "a scent of mortality" about it to awaken any great warmth of enthusiasm or poetic fervor in its description—

"For dangers uncounted are clustering there,
The pestilence stalks uncontrolled;
Strange poisons are borne on the soft languid air,
And lurk in each leaf's fragrant fold."

But the scenes portrayed in the ensuing pages (and this is the only point upon which the author relies in palliation of his offence) belong now mostly to the past. A new leaf in the character of this portion of the popular route to California has been opened: where but recently the slow boat toiled up against the swift current of the river, or the languid mule dragged his weary feet over the rough mountain passes, the iron horse snorts defiantly as he rushes on his undeviating course. Yet a few short years and what is herein written will perchance be read merely as a pleasant fiction. Perchance, too (and should this ever prove to be the case, the writer feels that it will not have been wholly in vain

"He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell"),

on some far future rainy day, some child of a coming generation, navigating wearily through his father's lumber-garret in quest of strange adventures, shall stumble upon a copy of this work which the unappreciative trunk-makers have passed by, and while poring over its pages shall believe with childish credulity that all which he finds therein recorded really happened; and then reviewing in his little mind the many blessings which took their rise in golden California, and like a generous river made the countries fertile through which they rolled, shall feel a glow of admiration and gratitude towards those brave pioneers who, amid so much hardship and self-denial, founded the great Empire of the West.

It may be proper to add here, as an explanatory note, that the succeeding pages, though not necessarily connected with or hinging upon any preceding ones, were nevertheless originally composed as a kind of sequel to a work entitled "THE CAMEL HUNT."

SALEM (MASS.), Dec. 1, 1852.

Life on the Isthmus.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE IN DISHABILLE.

WE saw Chagres under peculiar circumstances. At the time of our arrival there the California fever had reached its extreme height, but was still raging with unabated fury. Every day some steamer or sailing craft from our Atlantic cities, and occasionally one of the latter class from some French or English port, would enter and disgorge its mass of eager life upon the sandy point, and hurry back again for a fresh cargo. I doubt if ever slave ships, in the palmiest days of that hellish traffic, were crowded to the extent of some of the Chagres packets during this period of the California immigration.

It was a strange and exciting scene to look upon. Frequently after coffee in the morning I used to stroll down to the point, and watching my chance for a seat upon the piazza of the Empire City Hotel, would light my cigar, and gaze for hours unsated upon that wonderful kaleidoscope of human life. No romance that I ever read possessed for

half the interest of that ever-changing scene. In the forms before and around me, all nations, ages, and conditions of life were represented, and in such grotesque, and, for the most part, uncouth costumes! Seeing them thus huddled together, the rude and the gentle, the young and ruddy, and many another decrepid with age, the man of robust health and the tottering invalid, "the tender and delicate woman" and the boisterous ruffian of the lowest class, the virtuous and the vicious, of all grades and conditions, meeting for once in life upon a common ground, about to take from thence a common departure with the same physical end in view—alike in that one thing, but so different in all else—seeing all this, I felt sometimes a chilly questioning at heart as to whither this state of things was tending. There seemed to be a general breaking up of the accustomed forms of life, a disappearance of old land-marks; and I found myself inwardly asking, if in this lack of the sanctities of home, the quiet intercourse of friends, and all that is tranquillizing and ennobling in literature, science, and art, there was no danger that somehow in this rude and unavoidable intermingling of the purest and vilest, characters might become confounded, and the soul, wanting its accustomed food, lose something of its better nature, and allow "climbing impurity to stain the empyrean." The depressing state of the atmosphere, and the great avalanches of clouds that every now and then came rolling down the hill sides, hiding the green slopes, and deluging everything to the core, doubtless contributed to this mood of mind. But such grave questions seldom troubled me long—how could they—in Chagres!

There was also a comic side to the picture. The unaccountable style in which all were permitted to dress totally prevented a recognition of a person's grade, and gave rise to some misunderstandings; a retired judge might be accosted

as a boatman, and an ex-Governor from the States was equally subjected to be taken for a porter. People seemed in some cases as much surprised at finding themselves there as at anything else; and cast doubtful glances at the steamships outside, wallowing and rolling in the swell, hardly willing to acknowledge to themselves, that they were the same craft that looked so gallant and inviting at their piers in New York. Occasionally there were some droll rencontres, when one would see the countenance of a friend emerge from beneath a coarse black and white Chagres sombrero, or above the glowing folds of a red baize shirt. "Hilloa," was the general salutation, "you here?" which was ordinarily answered by a similar interrogatory more emphatically uttered, "*you* here?" What else indeed could be said under the circumstances? Mild looking men, inoffensive quiet people by nature, were straying upon the beach in the character of brigands, with a belt or sash about their waist, stuck full of pistols and bowie knives, on the *qui vive* for those attacks which had been predicted by their quondam neighbors; and exemplary young and middle-aged men, hurrying to and fro on all sides, showed plainly by their gait and gestures that they had "corrected the water of Chagres river" much too freely. Here would be a party of four or five, all talking to the same "native" in as many tongues, and the said native, nowise abashed at not being the proficient in languages which he was taken for, putting all five off quietly with his invariable "*poco tiempo*;" and there would be a foreign set, French doubtless, seated in the stern sheets of their "dug-out," just leaving to go up river, cosily eating sardines and tossing off their bumpers of claret to the inspiring notes of a polka, which one of the party was performing on a brass horn. There are always some torpid-livered people in every crowd, as a kind of ballast to the

spirits of the whole. On this particular occasion one of these fellows observed, that "the music would be pretty well out of that *mounseer* before he got to Gatoun," which another followed up by saying that "he reckoned that chap's horn could be bought cheap next morning;" whereupon a very bad-looking man clinched the whole matter by observing with an oath that "that fellow would dance over his grandmother's grave."

It was a great place for the study of character. On stepping ashore at Chagres men instinctively shook off the crust of conventionality, and came out in *propria persona*. I have heard that a ship brings out a man's true character, and the same is also affirmed of a prison. I think, however, that in our time the palm must be ceded to Chagres. There was in this place such an exquisite refinement of bad lodgings and worse fare, such an affluence of buggy cots, and such a poverty of wholesome bed-clothing, such filth on the levee and the beach, and such a sickening stench in the air—oh, but it was a fine place to bring out the salient points of a man's character! To be jolly under such circumstances, one would think would require more than the philosophy of even Mark Tapley. And yet there were jolly folks at Chagres—aye, even among the residents; men who did not live, but clung as it were desperately to the very tail-end of existence; there were some cheerful, if not happy, standing by their post as nobly as any warrior of old, or any Casabianca in the annals of song.

And these same gold-seekers, in their *outré* guise, with all their absurd misconceptions, their petty fault-findings, and their fretful impatience, had about them, on the whole, an air of troubled grandeur that was really heart-touching. Whatever might have been their respective aims, hopes, or prospects, they were all wanderers on the earth. They all had

the seal of inquietude set upon their faces, of which the querulous Childe says,

"This makes the madmen, who have made men mad
By their contagion."

Whatever might have been their respective troubles or diseases, they were all drinking the same bitter cup of medicine. Some were there to gratify a morbid restlessness of body, some urged on by a hungering of the soul for change amid excitement which

"But once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest, a fever at the core
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore."

Others had left home blind to the rosy smiles of children, and steeled against the passionate sobs of loving wives, resolved to be back, if there was any faith to be put in man's best endeavors; any just God in the high heavens' to drive for ever the wolf from the fold of the tender objects of their love: and others still had come hither from a harder necessity, because they were a burden in their own homes, and would have gone anywhere rather than longer have met glances so changed in those whom they still loved. And yet another and more melancholy class than any of these, because more incomprehensible, were those who sought here a refuge from themselves, from their own wicked thoughts, content to spend their days amidst all physical hardships, "to sleep amidst infection," to die rather than go back to the solitary companionship of their own souls.

Over and above everything else one great feeling predominated in the minds of men at Chagres, an impatience to be away. People no sooner landed on the beach than they

were bustling round to be off again. They all seemed to dread that one moment of too long delay, when the malaria poison should enter their blood, and laugh defiantly at the cunningest remedies. Yet this very feeling, so antagonistic to kindness and courtesy, to the credit of our nature be it said, diffused a sentiment of brotherhood throughout this incongruous mass. Men gazed shudderingly at the too significant hillocks everywhere visible, and looked into each other's faces, saying pitifully, "and *you* may be the next;" adding with an inward tremor, "or I—and may need your assistance in the last offices to my humanity."

"But some are dead, and some are gone,
 And some are scattered and alone;
 * * * * *
 And some are in a far countrie,
 And some all restlessly at home;
 But never more, oh, never we
 Shall meet to revel and to roam."

These lines, from the "Siege of Corinth," immediately succeeding those which I have chosen as a motto for this work, convey to my mind so truthful an idea of the probable final disposition of this caravan of human beings, that I have no inclination to enter into a description of their more common-place characteristics. How could I ever hope, by so doing, to give any accurate idea of the wonderful panorama to which I have but alluded? It will be better and more becoming in me to proceed at once with my plain, matter-of-fact narrative, leaving analysis and generalizations to more skilful pens.

Amid this chaos of moral life, there were, nevertheless, some drifting fragments of a better state of things occasionally to be discovered, and these won the eye of the observer as much by their rarity as by their own inherent beauty.

CHAPTER II.

VALE AND PARKINS.

ONE morning I was sitting at my usual place of resort on the piazza of the Empire City Hotel. It was rather a livelier day than ordinary—that is, I mean livelier on shore, for there was a fresh northerly wind blowing, which so tore up the surface of the sea and caused it to break so furiously upon the bar and beach, that the boatmen, in spite of their restless and daring spirit of activity, had not deemed it prudent to venture out. There was a rumor current on the point that one boat had started for the steamer Georgia early in the morning, and been capsized in the breakers off the second point beyond San Lorenzo, and that all on board had perished. This might have been true or not, but no one cared to run any risk in investigating the matter; the lost, whoever they were, would never be missed in Chagres, and as for the suddenness of their departure, why, it was not thought of, while so many were dying just as suddenly in our very midst.

There were three steamers outside, waiting passengers; and the large number collected to embark, and the momentary arrivals of boats down the river with passengers also homeward bound, gave a brisk aspect to the social features of life on shore. There were, besides, not a few unfortunate individuals, who had arrived at Chagres by these same steamers, and who, from various reasons, had not yet got away, on

their journey across the Isthmus. These two classes of people possessed great interest for each other, for while the outward bound had much to ask of the returned Californians, and hung upon their words as if their future life were being shaped by them, and even looked with a kind of religious awe upon their mud-soiled garments, and haggard, toil-worn faces, these latter, in turn, regarded their questioners with looks of mingled pity, wonder, and contempt. It seemed so strange to them that men having good clothes to wear, ruddy complexions, and homes where they might have stayed, were hurrying impatiently to get a sip of that same cup of hardship and self-denial which they had thought to have almost drained to the dregs. They had forgotten what brought them out in a similar manner, it was so long ago, and so many more recent and doubtless more palpable troubles had been theirs. But the "dust" of these same returning gold-hunters was a greater argument in favor of taking their past course, than anything they could adduce to offset it, because, in the minds of the outward-bound, as one of them convivially observed, it went right home to the part affected, like champagne after sea-sickness.

It was a lively day, and yet it would not have been lively anywhere but in Chagres; and even there, there was a dreariness, a baldness, and discomfort about its liveliness that modified it very much. There was less rain than usual that morning, but still enough to keep everything in a very undesirable state of dampness. In walking in from our camp, I had been saturated sufficiently to take the chivalry pretty well out of any man. But I had afterwards crossed to the native side of the town, to purchase some eggs and chickens for ourselves, and corn for the camels; and seeing everybody else in the like situation, had come to take it, as indeed I did everything at that time, as a matter of course.

As the day progressed, the gale increased. From where I sat, there was a fine view of the sea and beach ; but if the reader should now visit Chagres, he would find a great change in this part of the town : many new buildings have been erected between where the Empire City Hotel then stood and the sea, and the view from its piazza extends now but to the opposite side of the street. At this time, however, I could see as far as our camel encampment on the left, with a high range of hills shutting in the view beyond, the long beach, the landing point in front, and the sea, stretching to the horizon, bounded on the right by the hills and fort of San Lorenzo, and terminating in a gentle slope leading to the native town, between which and my point of survey flowed the Chagres river.

I shall not soon forget how gradually but steadily the wind kept rising that day, and how the great sea heaved and thundered beneath the touchings of its mighty hand ; how the rough, hairy breakers doubled and redoubled in size and fury, lashing the resounding shore with their white and out-spread arms, and how men came down to gaze at them as at a bristling army that hemmed them in from all they loved, and clasped each other's hands convulsively, glad to know that there were others in the world as insignificant and lonesome as themselves. The steamships in the bay rolled till you could see their decks as plainly as if you were on board ; and boats were torn from their fastenings, carried out by the retreating waves, and again whirled up high and dry upon the beach. There were some old wrecks along the shore, through whose worm-eaten decrepit timbers the sea came rushing with a perfect howl, writhing in and out of portholes and scuppers in long tortuous lines like angry serpents ; and men gazed likewise on these black, sepulchral wrecks, and shuddered

again, and looked back beseechingly to the merciless ocean, and their quiet homes seemed further off than ever. The bluff where the fort stood, was an especial mark for the sea; and its dark, slimy rocks, as they emerged from each struggle with the tempestuous waves, looked each time blacker and more defiant. But on the bar, what a perfect madness of waters! There was something awful about it—as if all the many bones which the sea had ever stolen from the warm, green earth were moving in their deep beds, and had contributed something to its ghastly whiteness.

I was smoking and looking about me—now in contemplation of the turbulent scene, now in studying the equally turbulent forms of humanity grouped around, when a man, somewhat remarkable in all the crowd, presented himself before me. He was a tall, long-limbed, loose-made man, with a large head, and a profusion of sandy hair and beard. He was attired in a suit of pepper-and-salt doeskin, with a wash-leather money-belt strapped outside about his waist, and ornamented with a pair of revolvers. He wore a light felt hat, with a broad brim, similar to those extensively used in California. But he was no returning gold-seeker. It was easy enough to see that, in the newness of his garments, the exposure of his money-belt, the ominous presence of his pistols, and particularly in the fresh, ruddy style of his countenance. He had a remarkable face. It was large, and each feature had its share; and his beard, which looked, indeed, more like a mane than a beard—the lion's part. There was nothing else about him that resembled a lion very much, except his name, which I afterwards found out was Sampson—Sampson Vale. He looked complacent, voluble, good-natured, fickle-minded, easy to take as well as give an affront, a lover of a certain kind of etiquette nevertheless, and, on the whole, rather addicted to the milkiness of human nature. Such, at all events, was,

as nearly as I can recollect, my first impression of the man. There happened to be a chair vacant at my side, which he very coolly settled into, and, laying his right hand upon my left knee, looked me full in the face, and inquired if I belonged to the camel party.

I replied in the affirmative.

"Do you know, sir," continued he, raising his hand from my knee, and stroking his beard therewith, at the same time smacking his lips as if in internal relish of the sentiment he was about to utter, "do you know, sir, that I have a good opinion of that enterprise?"

I replied, that never having had the pleasure of seeing or hearing of him before, I was really not aware of it.

"It is nevertheless a fact," continued he. "As our acquaintance is of short duration, I suppose that it will be necessary for me to inform you that I was educated as a blacksmith"—

"Are you the learned blacksmith?" inquired I, interrupting him.

"Why, not exactly," said he, "the fact is, I am a blacksmith by profession—but, like many people in this world, I don't always put my profession into practice."

Here he stopped, seeming to have lost the thread of his discourse, and smacked his lips for some moments with infinite relish.

"Since leaving my trade," resumed he, when he came to himself, "I have been into a little of everything, and ought to know something about the world."

"Ought, indeed," observed a small-sized man standing by his side, whom I had not before observed; "but you never will, for you'll never stick to any one thing long enough to get more than a smattering of it."

"Solomon Parkins," said the sandy-haired man, rising to

his extreme height, and looking down pitifully on the shorter individual at his side, at the same time stroking his beard and smacking his lips with an appearance of deep-seated self satisfaction, "are you aware, sir, that in attempting to injure me in the estimation of the world, you are rendering yourself supremely ridiculous?"

"See here, old Quanto," retorted this modern Solomon, "nobody is deceived by that affectation of superiority on your part. So, in future, when you speak to me, please to lay aside that fatherly style, and recollect that the firm of Vale and Parkins is dissolved, and that the junior partner is equal to the senior any day!"

"Poor Parkins," observed Vale, in a tone of well feigned commiseration; he then whispered in my ear, "but you will please to excuse this in him; for the poor fellow is a little—a little—you understand—wandering like in his wits."

I saw that I had "struck a vein," as the Californians say, and took a more minute survey of my new acquaintances. The first, I now remarked, in addition to what I had already observed, had a rapid restless manner of glancing about him, as if he took in everything there was to be seen, and seized at once upon its more palpable features. There was no repose in his countenance to indicate that he was weighing in his mind the intrinsic worth or uses of what his eyes saw, much less that he was suggesting to himself any possible dark side to the picture. His companion, for companions they were, and of long standing, I saw at a glance was run in quite a different mould. Although he probably had nothing of the old Solomon about him but his name, yet it was very evident that he was provided with a *con* for every *pro* of his former business associate. He was attired in a similar manner to his partner, even to the pistols and felt hat, from which fact it was fair to suppose at first sight that he could

not help entertaining a kind of respect for his opinions, which nevertheless troubled him as a weakness repudiated by his better judgment.

As I afterwards found out, these men had been in business together as blacksmiths some years previous in a town in Maine, that the former had been the active manager and financier of the firm, and that in consequence of his speculative tendencies and absurd habits, complete ruin had gradually overtaken them, in the words of Parkins, "of course." That they had then dissolved their business connexion, and since then, Mr. Parkins had been adrift on the world, his naturally gloomy disposition seeing so many obstacles in every new adventure which presented itself, as to discourage him from entering upon it altogether; while Mr. Vale, on the other hand, with his buoyant character and addiction to the speculative, had dipped into a hundred different enterprises, but always with the same unsatisfactory result. And yet although Parkins lost no opportunity of "showing up Vale," as he expressed it, and never ceased to reproach him as the cause of all his misfortunes, yet having been once within his influence, he had found it impossible to withdraw himself; and so followed him in all his mad or visionary speculations, as a kind of unofficial, junior partner, living in an atmosphere of sombre retrospections, and drawing sustenance from a source which must have sadly affected his digestion. If Vale had been a man of thoughtful, brooding temperament, he would have looked upon Parkins as his evil genius, destined ever more to haunt him, a gloomy shadow always eating into his life's sunshine; but as it was, he regarded him merely as an unpleasant mosquito, or blue-bottle, buzzing about, and occasionally butting against the polished surface of his character—a troublesome little object to be sure, but one that could easily be brushed away.

We were now joined by a third party, a man equally tall with Vale, but thick-set, hard-featured, and with black hair and beard. He might have been a Californian or anything else that savored of the desperate. He was a bad-looking man.

"How about lie the snake?" inquired he of Vale.

"Oh, all right," answered Sampson. "I left him safe in his basket, but I am a little in this way about the snake business,—that is, I am in this way between the snake and the camel business." Here Mr. Vale held out his right arm, and placing the palm of his hand perpendicularly in the air, moved it regularly from right to left, and *vice versa*, intending to hint thereby that he was in a state of indecision on the subject, or rocking gently between the two.

"I'll satisfy you on the matter," said the man.

"That won't require much," observed Parkins, with a half sneer, "but what are those objects floating in the river and drifting towards the bar? They look to me like human bodies."

"Carcasses!" observed the bad-looking fellow brutally. "They're not worth saving. If they had dust in their belts they wouldn't float. But come, it blows too much of a snorter here, let us go round to the Irving and look after the snake. Drink anything?"

I declined the invitation at once, from an unwillingness to drink with such a wicked-looking man. Parkins had evidently a desire to indulge, but did not dare to undertake it without the example of Vale, who also declining, the snake proprietor stepped up to the bar alone. His manner of calling for liquor was characteristic. Putting on his sternest expression, he fastened his glance upon a timid young man among the waiters, and throwing down his dime, said in a measured Websterian tone, "Let it be plain brandy and water."

We picked our way through the crowd round to the Irving House. On ascending to the sleeping room, where were some-hundred plain cot beds, in an apartment resembling the garret of an Irish shanty, we were conducted by Vale to his cot, beneath which, he informed us, was the pannier containing the snake. With the crooked handle of a cotton umbrella, which he pulled from amongst his luggage, he proceeded to fish out the basket into daylight, but the snake was gone.

"Stepped out, by Jupiter!" said Vale. "Just my luck;—Hilloa! any of you seen a rattlesnake about nine feet long loose in this chamber?"

This cool interrogatory was addressed to some eight or ten saffron-visaged invalids, occupying as many different cots, in the various stages of Chagres fever. How far the electric shock thereby communicated to their debilitated frames helped to kill or cure, I cannot say. One poor devil, evidently near his end, raised his weary head, and looking at us with a glassy eye, inquired if he heard aright, and if it was really a rattlesnake we were in search of. On being answered in the affirmative, he pointed his thin, pale, skinny hand towards an india rubber clothes-bag, leaning against a cot, immediately alongside of where Parkins was sitting.

"There is one," gasped he faintly; "that black-whiskered man put him there on guard. It's strange enough, but, oh, thank Heaven, that I'm not delirious!"

"You miserable vagabond!" yelled Parkins, as he sprang from his seat, giving us a full view of a fine specimen of the scaly brown and white rattlesnake of the tropics. "You old humbug of a Quanto Valley that you are, don't you see you've like to kill me with your confounded speculations?"

"Solomon," observed Vale in reply, "moderate your emotions, and don't make a fool of yourself before strangers."

"Yes," remarked the snake-tamer; "Yellow Jack speaks true; seeing your clothes-bag out in this unprotected style, I put the snake on duty. This is one of the uses to which the animal can be applied, and in this he has no superior."

"Beautiful design!" exclaimed Vale, glancing at Parkins with a triumphant air; "they will be invaluable on the Isthmus and in California, and I should not be surprised to hear yet of rattlesnakes being put in charge of baggage on the railroads in the States."

"With the Anaconda," observed the man of serpents, calling off the rattlesnake from his post of duty, and allowing him to coil upon his arm, with his head downwards, towards his hand; "with the Anaconda we shall do greater things. This reptile, as you are probably aware, is possessed of great fleetness. He can likewise be trained to run in a given direction. In the carrying of letters and such valuable packages we can make him of great service."

"There's for you, Solomon," observed Vale, patting Parkins affectionately between the shoulders. "Anaconda Line across the Isthmus! Through before breakfast! How does that strike you, eh, Solomon? I am afraid, sir," continued he, turning to me, "that your camels, though doubtless well disposed beasts, are a little behind the times."

While Mr. Vale was indulging in this bit of enthusiasm, and annihilating space thus freely in his own mind, the wicked snake-tamer had, by various little devices, such as pinching and pricking the snake, excited him to the requisite degree of rage, and raising his hand to Vale's right shoulder, as the latter concluded his remarks, let out the snake upon him in such a decisive manner as caused him, Vale, to yell with excruciating pain.

"Oh, I'm bit! I'm bit," roared he, "help, and be quick with it, or I shall die!"

Then it was that Parkins, forgetful of all the little matters of difference between them, and looking only to the salvation of him who had once been his counsellor and friend, lost entirely what little quantum of wit he ever possessed, and rushed at random among the cots, calling upon somebody, anybody, to saw off Vale's leg, or fetch an emetic, or do something else likely to be of equal service in the cure of a venomous bite.

Meanwhile, Sampson lay in his last agony upon the cot, tossing to and fro, his countenance already changing and becoming spotted, and frothy saliva running from his mouth; there he lay, gazing beseechingly upon the dark-visaged snake-fancier at his side.

"Enough of this," said the latter at length, with a kind of disgust in his tone; and turning Vale over upon his back, he applied his mouth to the part affected, and drew back the poison which was already dissipated in various parts of the system. He stayed a moment while his patient recovered in a measure his wonted quietude, and then carefully replacing the rattlesnake in his wicker pannier, bade us a courteous good morning, and went off down stairs.

"I am glad he is gone," said the sick man, who had first pointed the snake out to us, "not that there was any fear of his biting *me*, but when a man's moments are few, and he needs all his last thoughts for God and himself, it somehow disconcerts him very much, to know that there is a live rattlesnake within a few feet of his bed."

Ye who are about to die at home, in the midst of your family and friends, with everything made soft and tender to your aching limbs, with every harsh sound hushed about you, and every wish gratified almost sooner than expressed; think of this Chagres death-bed—for it is no fancy sketch.

Vale recovered as speedily as he was taken; Parkins also recovered—his wits.

"Solomon," said I to him aside, as I was going off (his Christian name was so fitly inappropriate, that one could not resist calling him by it); "this would be a good thing for your old partner, if it would learn him not to meddle with what he doesn't understand."

"All creation couldn't do that," returned Solomon, "I couldn't myself."

And as if to prove the truth of this remark, Sampson Vale thereupon straightened himself up in bed, and thus delivered himself:—

"Solomon, my lad, that was well done, eh. If I could only learn that dodge, we'd make our fortune in the State of Maine alone. I'd draw out the poison, and you'd be the man to be bitten!"

CHAPTER III.

A LIFE SAVED.

ON returning to the point I found Tom, who had come in from the camp to hunt me up, as he said, and notify me that dinner was nearly ready.

"One of those chickens that you sent out by El-Sta," observed he, "was condemned before going to the spit. Mrs. Wallack and your wife were present at the opening of him; and his breakfast, consisting of two centipedes and a scorpion, still lay in his stomach undigested. I suppose they did not want to eat a dyspeptic animal, as they immediately ordered the fowl to be thrown away. In lieu of him we are to have a dish of green lizard fricaseed."

"Where is the Major?" inquired I.

"You know very well," replied Tom, "that he never leaves the camels except for the woods. What a keen eye for sport he has to be sure! and how he revels in the bosom of this voluptuous nature! He is as fond of the bush as you are of the town. Now, do you know what he said to me this morning, as I was complaining of our delay in this cursed hole? 'Tom,' said he, 'a man that don't enjoy himself at Chagres, is a disgrace to human nature, and a libel on the Almighty!' Such a complimentary thrust as that, of course, was a clincher."

"Our cold-blooded and barren New England natures," said I, "are little fitted to sympathize with the impulsive

temperament of one born and reared, as the Major has been, among the glorious wild woods of Kentucky."

"I should think," continued Tom, "that he had never lived anywhere else. Why, I have seen him lie for hours on the damp grass of the woods, watching the birds at their occupations or sport among the boughs, or straining his eyes to catch each particular shade of their varied plumage, as they shot across the only line of sunshine that had ventured down that lonely path. And I have seen, too, his eyes glisten, like the green and gold scaly feathers on the breast of the king-hummers, as he calls them, when in some more venturesome wheel of theirs he has discovered something which he had not previously seen, 'some new beauty,' as he terms it. Of course he has a right to enjoy himself as he thinks proper, and prefer his fifty varieties of the humming-bird even to the golden cock of the rock, and the crimson and purple-crested chatterers, if he will; but I must say, I should think better of the Major's taste if he did not treat my parrots and toucan quite so cavalierly!"

"What do you think of the weather, Tom?"

"I think, if this wind lasts much longer, we shall have to up stakes, and move our camp back to the Indian village. The spray comes at times as far as the old trees, and makes the camels fairly wince under it."

"No damage done yet, I hope?"

"Well, none out there; but I must tell you of a laughable affair which occurred on the beach a few minutes before you returned. You recollect that small panel house, which was bought by my protégé, Bill Smith, and which he had erected in the rear of old Joe's house, there?"

"Certainly, and called the Camel Restaurant."

"Exactly, in honor of our quadrupeds. Well, one of those outrageous rollers, which you sometimes see, made a

rush for Bill's hotel, and, not being founded on a rock, as you are aware, it was swept away. It happened that Bill and two or three others were inside at the time. When the establishment was found to be fairly outward bound, they crept forth, amid the shouts of the crowd. By the aid of a coil of stout rigging which was fortunately at hand, they were all safely landed. Just as Bill was coming out of the surf, his natural love of the theatrical prevailed. Turning to his retreating house, now in a score of pieces, he immortalized himself as follows: 'There goes the homestead—and Jim Wilkins's boots with it—

“And now I'm in the world alone,
Upon the wide, wide sea—
But why should I for others groan
When none will sigh for me!”

The effect was beautiful: particularly as not one in a hundred of the crowd had ever read Byron, and the lines were, consequently, credited to Bill, as a happy effusion of the moment.”

“Your protégé will probably now fall back upon his original idea, of returning in the Double Eagle?”

“Yes,” said Tom, “Bill has decided to take the back track. He has seen the tip of the elephant's tail, and don't care about a further acquaintance with the animal.”

It may be as well here, for the gratification of those readers who like to see things through in every particular, and who take an especial interest in the pecuniary results of adventure, to state that our vessel arrived at Chagres at a very favorable moment for a return freight. There was, as I have before said, a large number of returning Californians, seeking passage to the States. With the lumber which had served for the camel stalls, we fitted up the

vessel's hold for the accommodation of seventy passengers, and as she lay inside of the bar, almost touching the levee in fact, the desired number was easily obtained. I will merely add, as a mercantile fact, that these passengers paid fifty dollars a head—a pretty good business for the owners you will allow—and so dispose of the Double Eagle once for all. Not that I am weary, either, of the pleasant associations which will ever cluster about the memory of her voyage, or cease to think of her as floating always in an atmosphere of pleasant sunshine, with some of the desert sand still lodged in the fibres of her rigging, and the seams of her deck; but our life while on board her was a dreamy and fanciful one, and we have now come to deal with hard realities.

It was about time to think of returning to the camp for dinner, and we should accordingly have taken up our line of march thitherward, had it not been that, at that moment, there was every appearance of the approach of rain—even while we had been talking, the whole sky had become overcast and leaden, settling gradually lower and lower, and hemming in the horizon on every side, till we seemed to be sitting under a dark, shadowy arch, within which none of heaven's sunshine had ever come. Its radiation blackened the sea, save where it gave a pallid hue to its whiteness, and made the shore look dark and sombre, and changed also the countenances of men. Beyond its visible sides, the mutterings of the thunder made one think of huge vapory monsters bellowing in the black forests of cloud-land. And the great breakers, equally monstrous, now that they seemed shut up within the same gloomy confine as ourselves, were perfectly frightful to listen to, as they roared in such solemn madness up the beach. There was no chilliness attending this onset, yet men closed their

lips firmly, and buttoned their garments to their chins, as if to fight a subtle enemy. At last it struck, dancing gleefully with its million feet, upon the ragged surface of the sea, trampling over the roofs, and bristling up against the sides of houses, or hurrying headlong in close array down the channels of the street. And now God help the invalids under those same roofs, for there is not one of them but has his own, particular rivulet, to give a chillier cast to his discomfort; and God help those who are on the river, among whom there may be women and children, for a thousand streams are rushing from the mountains to swell its tide, which will soon run like a mill-sludge, and drifting trunks of trees and snags, and fearful eddies at sudden bends, are hard things to navigate amongst. And those poor devils, who have no change of clothing (and there are many such here), who are liable to lie down to-night in their wet garments on damp beds, and wake in the morning with an ague that shall stick to their bones for years, are they not also to be pitied and prayed for?

"Sail ho!" shouted a voice, as the vapory mass dissolved itself, and disclosed the old horizon far 'out seaward—a strange cry at such a time, and a hazardous navigator it must be, who would not claw off a rock-bound coast, with the devil's own roadstead at the best, in such a gale, and with dirty weather to boot. It was nevertheless no false alarm; a large ship, under reefed jib and close reefed topsails, was bearing directly down for the anchorage. She came upon our vision opportunely enough, stepping with such a fearless gallant air into our storm-drenched circle, another connecting link with the bright world away. As she rounded to before dropping anchor, careening in the process till her yard-arms touched the water, and showing upon deck the usual crowd of passengers, she displayed at her mizen-peak the glorious tricolor of sister France.

I love the French!—I love them, not because of their great name in history, nor of the noble monuments of art and science which they have scattered along the annals of their whole national existence, nor wholly because of their unquenchable love of liberty and their dashing spirit of adventure, but for their genial, generous soul; because they have an eye for everything that is bright and beautiful; because they are the apostles of cheerfulness, and in whatever circumstances we meet them contribute so much to make the weary days of our life seem gay and lightsome. If a man would find the most direct road to my heart, let him come in the name of Lafayette.

Landing at such a time was, of course, not to be thought of by any sane mind; and yet, if my eyes did not deceive me, preparations for that purpose were going on. Yes, there is a boat on the lee side, with two oarsmen already in; and there is a third descending by the man-ropes. A desperate set of fellows, certainly!—they must be short of provisions, and are going alongside of one of the steamers for a supply. But no—they head for the shore! Can it be possible? It is but a frail skiff—the captain's gig, probably, and we can only catch a glimpse of her now and then, as she rises like an egg-shell on the very crest of a towering sea. She comes on gallantly, guided by no tyro. And yet, what folly to have made the venture! for they must certainly lose their boat, and, unless expert swimmers, will all go to the bottom together. Bravo! she comes on well; that fellow is a worthy countryman of those who never flinched while “following the imperial eagle over the Alps.” She is heading directly for the fort. She will soon be among the breakers!

“Men there!” said a small, spare, pale-faced fellow, coming out of the hotel, “who’ll go with me in a surf-

boat, for a rescue of those crazy-headed fellows? Talk fast!"

But not a man stirred.

"A free grog bill at my hotel (for this young man was landlord of the "Empire City"); lodgings while you stay, and anything else you may want into the bargain: only come on!"

"Take back that offer," said Tom, springing to his feet, "and I'm with you for one!"

A dozen others immediately presented themselves. The landlord picked out a tall, sandy-haired man; and saying two were enough, hurried down to the boat. To my surprise, this second man was Vale.

"There goes the venturesome old fool," said a voice at my elbow, which I need not inform the reader belonged to the ex-junior partner.

Recognising me, he tapped my shoulder cautiously, and whispered in my ear, "But we must make allowances for Signor Quanto; for do you know, that in reality he's crazy as a coot?"

"Why do you call him Quanto?" said I. "That is not his name."

"No," replied Parkins, "his name is Sampson Vale; but the conceited old scoundrel bought a book in New York entitled 'Spanish in Six Lessons;' and having studied that day and night on the passage, of course considers himself a proficient in the language. You can hear him any hour of the day dickering with the natives on the beach, always beginning his remarks with 'Quanto Valet.' That is why we have nicknamed him thus; not so bad either, considering that *valley* is a kind of short for Vale."

But the boats. The Frenchman's is already on the edge of the bar, and the helmsman sits in the stern-sheets as coolly

as Napoleon in the saddle at Marengo. And our gallant young landlord is likewise nearing the other edge; he is standing, and steers with an oar. They are approaching each other like knights at a tournament; but the white, roaring, seething gulf is between them.

Heaven help us! the Frenchman is in. Ha! a rudder is a feeble thing in such a caldron; she twists and twines like a serpent. But see, something has broken; she is off in the trough! angels of mercy, she is over; they are lost!

Not quite, for they are not in deep water, and the oarsmen are already clinging to the rocks under Fort Lorenzo. The helmsman, where is he? All right. He is on his legs, with the sea showering him like a cataract. But he is a fellow of nerve, and will weather it. There he goes over, under. O God, he is lost!

Stay, there is the surf-boat within her length of him; she is climbing the same breaker that knocked him under; she is bolt upright on its perpendicular side. See, she rises to it, and floats again with her bows deep in the brine. There is no Frenchman to be seen; he must have carried something heavy about his person, for he has gone down. Hurrah! there he is; haul him in, boys! Nine cheers for Quanto Valley! Give it to him, boys, and raise the dead!

Yes, at the young helmsman's command, Sampson Vale had hitched his oar, and his old sledge-hammer arm never did better or prompter service. In an eye's twinkle, as it were, the Frenchman was safely deposited in the bows, and Sampson hard at it again on the long and strong stroke. They pulled out into the comparatively smooth water, where our young hero of a helmsman shifted his oar end for end, and by a use of the same dexterity which he had already shown, recrossed the bar in safety, and with gentle strokes the boat came slowly up to the point.

I think it is the author of the "Bachelor of the Albany" who says, "the delicate spirits of earth are the bravest." The landlord of the Empire City Hotel was a young man of a frail and almost effeminate form, an Italian by birth, but educated in America. He had the elegant classic profile and curling hair peculiar to his countrymen, and would have been called rather pretty than handsome. But he had the bearing of a prince, and the fire of a thousand furnaces in his coal-black eye. His name was Angelo Vitti.

When the Frenchman came to land, we saw at once that he was a man of a distinguished presence and resolute character. He seemed a little chagrined at having been the hero of such an awkward affair, or rather at having been the awkward hero of so gallant an affair, for his whole deportment exhibited a profound sense of acknowledgment to Vitti and his companions. As he turned to look after his brave oarsmen, who were now scrambling along on the opposite side of the river beneath the beetling crags of the fort, we saw that he had received in his fall a severe blow upon his head. The blood was flowing profusely therefrom, and it was probably in consequence of this that he staggered, and but for the timely aid of Tom and Quanto Valley would have fallen to the ground. At the direction of Vitti he was taken to the hotel.

A Chagres hotel makes but a sorry hospital. Vitti, however, had in his establishment rooms of his own, where it was said more elegance and comfort were to be found than in any other place in Chagres. It was also whispered that this suite of apartments was presided over by a sister of Vitti's, a beautiful girl, who was to him a kind of ministering angel, and kept in check, by her presence, the native desperateness of his character. For if the truth must be told, this young adventurer was a gambler, and, like many of his countrymen,

"sudden and quick in quarrel." Here was a nice bit of romance for you.

To one of these rooms the Frenchman was immediately taken, and I being at hand was the fortunate individual who was dispatched for a surgeon. As good luck would have it, my staunch friend Doctor G—— was at that moment on the piazza, and we accordingly went up together.

The room into which we were ushered, was an apartment redolent of elegance and good taste. I may not be able to describe its minute features, but its first appearance communicated to my frame an electric thrill of pleasure. It was as if I had shut my eyes, and there had come suddenly to my inner sense a sweet vision of home. We stepped from the rough boards of the entry, upon a soft and yielding tapestry carpet; the richly carved chairs, sofas, lounges, and pier tables, all of the choicest designs, the costly mirrors, the choice paintings, the vases, statuary, and flowers, the whole arranged with such an exquisite eye to pleasing effect, overcame us like a dream; for it seemed to our hungry and unaccustomed senses, as if there was an odor from the spirit of beauty, like that which diffuses itself from "spices, and balm, and myrrh," filling the apartment and overhanging it "like a summer cloud." Of a verity, the most delicious intoxication cometh not from the wine cup. There is a subtle essence of which men have sometimes quaffed too freely, which fires the brain, and sends them mad, and staggering about the earth. But I am too fast—

When we entered, the Frenchman was reclining on a sofa, and Tom stood by his side washing the wound, while Sampson Vale held the water basin. Doctor G—— examined the part affected, and pronounced the blow to be by no means a serious one, and that with quiet and suitable attention the unfortunate man would soon recover.

"Where is Vitti?" said I to Tom, "did he not come up with you?"

"Yes," replied Tom, "and he has gone to his sister's chamber, to consult about what is to be done with this wounded knight."

There were two rooms leading from that in which we were, one the chamber of Vitti, and the other occupied by his sister. From the latter, Vitti came forth as we were speaking, leading by the hand a young and beautiful girl, in whom it was easy to see the outward signs of a near relationship.

"My sister," said he proudly, presenting her to us.

I shall not attempt to give to the reader a description of the person of this gentle girl. Her image is so associated in my mind with the highest, holiest idea of a sister's love and devotion, that I fear lest I should mar its delicate lineaments by venturing on their delineation. A tender exotic from fair Italy, her outward frame was a true type of the exquisite beauty of her character.

"Lotta," said Vitti, looking towards the sufferer, "here is an invalid for you to nurse; take good care of him, and I think he may survive the effects of his recklessness."

"With much pleasure," answered Lotta, in the tenderest of tones, "if you desire it, dear Angelo."

She looked into her brother's eyes as she spoke, a look as calm, and pure, and peaceful, as that which the quiet stars shed down from heaven, and she saw not the glance of unfeigned wonder and admiration which the sick man cast towards her. There was nothing wrong about the look; it was the spontaneous tribute of a susceptible heart to woman's loveliness; and had she seen it, it would not have called the faintest blush of maidenly shame to her cheek, and yet I did not like it.

It was a presentiment hard to define. The countenance of the Frenchman was such a specimen of manly beauty ; there was something in his clear broad forehead and large soul-lit eyes, so proud and trustworthy ; there was not the vestige of anything mean, base, or sensual in his whole deportment, but something noble and generous, that spoke of the great, because good qualities inherent in the heart. If there is any truth written in human physiognomy, he was a man to be trusted, aye, even with the infinite wealth of a virgin's heart. But if he was not, then God help the world, for there is no outward mark upon his creatures by which we may know them—the good from the bad.

And yet I did not like this sudden recognition, on his part, of the girl's grace and beauty, for it seemed to me as if she were spiritualized by the position she had chosen for herself in life—a thing apart from earth—and I could not contemplate this possible connexion with it, even in the highest, purest form, without an accompanying presentiment of evil. I cannot define this impression, but I felt it not the less strongly because so vaguely.

It seemed that Vitti had experienced a corresponding sentiment.

"Lotta," said he playfully, as we were all leaving to go down stairs together, "take good care of yourself, darling, as well as of your patient."

She answered with the same heart-touching tenderness as before.

"Our dear father and mother are in heaven, Angelo. You know how they loved us while on earth. Did we cease to love them, or become in any way unworthy of their continued affection, would it not, think you, mar their eternal happiness?"

Beautiful Carlotta Vitti! thy parents were indeed in

heaven; and thou, in thy loveliness and purity, wert not far from them.

We descended the stairs in a kind of stupor, like persons who had seen a vision. I was brought to my every-day senses by a piercing scream from Quanto Valley. The snake proprietor had met us on the piazza, and laid his hand familiarly upon Quanto's shoulder.

"Nay, don't yell in that manner," said he; "although by the insertion of my finger nails into your flesh, I could poison you as easily as a serpent. But be easy on that score. You are a brave fellow in your way, and to-day have done me a good service. Do you understand," continued he, as Vale looked a little bewildered, "in the rescue of the French Marquis de G—— you have done me good service?"

I shall never forget the desperately wicked expression of the fellow's face as he said this—Heaven and Hell! Hell and Heaven! And can it be that there is so little earthly space between the two?

CHAPTER IV.

MONSIEUR CRAPOLET.

“OH, but we went merrily” in our encampment by the sea. The few days that we spent at Chagres were by no means tedious. Our mode of life was as uncivilized and gipsyish, as the most ardent lover of the picturesque could desire. We certainly had enough to make us uncomfortable, shifts enough to make to get along any way, and we therefore enjoyed ourselves extremely.

The first night of our stay in camp had been a rainy one, and we immediately found out that our Arab tents were not the requisite style of dormitories for that country. We had, accordingly, the next day purchased in town some panel houses, and tarred canvas for covering them. By this arrangement we had plenty of lodging-room. Our cooking was done in the rear, the stove being set up beneath a roof of tarred canvas supported on sticks. We eat out of doors, in pleasant weather, squatting upon the grass in Arab fashion, and during the showers, anywhere that promised shelter.

It didn't, however, matter so much where we slept, as that we slept at all; or in what place we eat, provided we had any thing to eat, and cooked in such a manner as to render it palatable. As for sleeping, we had to do it whenever we could. There was no particular time set apart and consecrated to it—I mean among the multitude then at Chagres.

Their ideas on this subject were very loose. People who had broken away from the conventionalities of life in other respects, were not expected to conform to this very negative one of observing a particular hour for retiring to rest; and the result was, that we were often favored with company at a time when we were quite unprepared for their reception. Parties in quest of better accommodation than they had been able to find in Chagres proper, deluded by our lights in the distance, came thither, and were unwilling to be persuaded that we did not keep a hotel or house of entertainment. Marauding parties, who had found night hideous at the "Irving" and "Empire City," were instinctively felt at times to be creeping amongst the brushwood, or plunging into the river on our left, and occasionally made us certain of their actual neighborhood by firing off guns and pistols at inoffensive objects of natural history. The worst of all these unpleasant little coteries, were, I think, those who were addicted to serenading. Oh, the hours that I have lain, half asleep and half awake, wondering who it was that persisted so pertinaciously in his request to be carried "back to old Virginny;" and where was that poor girl Susannah, who was so plaintively coaxed to abstain from crying; and that cruel but "lovely Fan," why didn't she "come out to-night," and still these complaining longings? Yet to say that we did not rather like this state of things, would be hardly true. It was such an excellent representation of the pursuit of conviviality under difficulties, that not to have appreciated it would have shown a barrenness of spirit, to which I, for one, do not feel willing to plead guilty.

In the alimentary department, things were very unsettled. It was difficult, in the first place, to get anything to eat; such a hungry set as were these gold-seekers while *in transitu*, I believe the world never saw before or since,

They were, it is true, charged a high price for their meals, but then it was on this very account the more foolish in them to attempt to act up to the Yankee doctrine of getting their money's worth, inasmuch as what they did eat ordinarily, was, in one particular, like land in the state of New Hampshire, worth the most the least there was of it. But such as it was even, it was hard to get. It is true, there was a bullock daily slaughtered by a miserable specimen of human nature from Carthagera, who used to sell him, hide, horn, and hoof, and, it was whispered, an old boot or two into the bargain; but as I had observed that none of the Chagres residents ever partook of this luxury, we acted upon the hint, and likewise denied ourselves the same. But it is idle to tell what we didn't have; and it was certainly curious to see what we did have, and how we went to work to get it.

There was now and then an arrival from Jamaica or Carthagera, with turtle, chickens, sheep, yams, plantains, and the like. When this supply fell short, we made diplomatic visits from kitchen to kitchen of the various hotels; and if perchance a less ravenous spirit than usual had that day prevailed at table, we assisted to keep from spoiling the fragments which remained. At other times, we went on board vessels lying alongside of the levee, and sometimes succeeded in getting a junk of "old horse;" and, on one occasion—a fact, reader—a pot of baked beans! These things, united with what the Major brought in from the woods, and what we received as tribute from bivouacs in our neighborhood, kept us after a fashion.

Our hours for eating were, whenever we had anything prepared to eat. And here was a new source of annoyance, the preparing of our food. We had no cook, although our library boasted of a cook-book. Often a dish whose appear-

ance we had anxiously awaited, would present itself in such a questionable shape, that we dared not touch it. It had been prepared "according to the book;" only in cases where we did not have the ingredients required by the said book, we had sometimes substituted such as we did have, which altered materially the whole flavor and relish of the thing. But an acquisition was in store for us, which was to put things in this department on an entirely new footing.

I think it was some two days after the arrival of the French ship, that Tom and I were loafing despairingly about *home*, after an unsuccessful sally into the town for food. It was two o'clock; and we had that morning breakfasted at nine. The Major was in the woods, naturalizing. Our Moors were preparing a huge pot-full of their everlasting *kes-coo-soo*, a dish which they were never tired of.

"Tom," said I in a feeble tone, "our sole resource now is in the Major."

"Yes," replied Tom; "and a possible dinner off humming-birds is a very unsatisfactory prospect to look forward to."

"To think, Tom, that we have nothing in camp but the remains of a barrel of biscuit, two junks of salt pork, one ham, a few eggs, a little salt and sugar."

"Except the liquor," said Tom, mournfully.

"And four o'clock is coming, Tom."

"Yes," said Tom, musing; "and five—"

"Aye, and six, Tom."

A shout from the returning Major interrupted this spirited dialogue. He hove in sight through the bushes in the rear ground, and was accompanied by a portly stranger; the *two* being followed at a short distance by a very old negro. As they approached, we were pleased to see that the Major bore a string of birds; and that his companion, besides his fowling-

piece and ammunition, carried a large basket, which, from the manner in which it affected his gait, evidently contained something heavy. The old negro had also a struggling animal, which looked amazingly like a monkey, slung across his back, and a large pagara, or wicker basket, poised upon his head.

"Monsieur Crapolet," said the Major, presenting his companion.

"Messieurs, j'ai bien l'honneur," said Monsieur Crapolet, bowing with the easy off-hand courtesy of a Frenchman. -

Yes, this was Monsieur Crapolet—a gentleman, it is true, of whom I had never heard before, but a man most worthy to be heard of, notwithstanding. In physique he was a large man, above the common height, and very portly. He had a broad full face, and a head bald upon the top, which shone when he removed his hat in saluting us, as if it had been varnished. His beard was closely shaven and well sprinkled with grey stumps, as was also the short crispy hair upon the sides and back of his head. He had the merry twinkle of a *bon vivant* in his small blue eyes; and a voluptuous style of mouth, about which lingered palpably some of the savory essence distilled from the many good things which had travelled that "red pathway." This very pleasant specimen of humanity was attired in a coarse blue hunting-shirt, hanging loose over a pair of white cotton trowsers, stout shoes of raw hide, and a broad-brimmed, dull-colored *chapeau de fantasie*.

The Major, who had already made this gentleman out to be a character, informed us that he had invited him to make "one of us." Men are always gayest when on their last legs. With starvation awaiting us at the next corner, we nevertheless welcomed this additional palate to our midst, and Tom proposed to celebrate the occasion by a drink.

"Shall it be l'eau-de-vie?" inquired he of our new friend.

The Frenchman upon this challenge laid down his arms, and divesting himself of chapeau, powder-flask, and shot-pouch, observed that he should interpose no objection to our taking a small sip all round of that excellent "*eau que prolonge la vie, et que nous rends gai et joyeuse.*"

I need not say that this introductory sentiment of his completely won our hearts, and made us the more regret the lack of means for carrying out a hospitality which was so well received. I ventured to observe thus much to Monsieur Crapolet, who quite perfected his conquest over us by replying—

"*Soyez tranquille. I will take charge of the culinary department myself; I have a boy with me who is au fait in such matters—Thom, venez ici.*"

The old negro deposited his pagara and monkey near the "cook-house," and came tottering up to where we sat. He was a toothless, grizzly, decrepit subject. He was a "boy" doubtless, in the sense that he was far advanced in second childhood. I am not aware of any way of ascertaining with exactitude a negro's age, but I think that this boy must have been somewhere in the second century of his existence. So long, indeed, had his soul and body been together, that the one seemed to have lost entirely its influence with the other, for this boy had a habit of constantly spitting when he talked, and he always thought aloud, and of scratching his head at frequent intervals—little physical peculiarities which I am very sure a professional cook would not indulge in, if he was supposed to have any control over his bodily functions. In that very remote period when Thom had been younger than he now was, he had probably been somewhat of a hard customer, if one might draw any inference at all from sundry deep cuts across his cheek and shoulders, and the fact that both of his ears were considerably cropped;

even now, as he stood before us, he fairly crouched as if in expectation of the well remembered lash. His costume is easily described. It consisted of a pair of coarse blue cotton trousers.

"This boy," said Monsieur Crapolet, giving the youth a gentle chuck under the chin, which sent his drooping lower jaw with prodigious force against the upper, and brought his face into a horizontal position; "this boy, whom I call Thom, an abbreviation of the English name Thomas, understands well his affair. *N'est-ce pas, Thom?*"

"*Oui, monsieur,*" said Thom. He was not so much a promising boy as an assenting one.

"*Eh bien, Thom,* we will to-day have for dinner"—and our new superintendent of the culinary department went on with a string of dishes, specified in the Creole dialect, which betokened something bountiful, if not nice. At the enumeration of each article, Thom inserted his assenting "*Oui, monsieur.*" For so negative a character, he certainly made a great use of the affirmative in conversation.

Monsieur Crapolet then stated that he had only one condition to make with us before entering upon the practical duties of his situation, and that was that he should be the supreme head of his department, and that no one else should interfere even to the extent of visiting the cook-house while in operation. As it has always been an article of my creed not to inquire too closely into the causes of any good practical result, this arrangement was quite acceptable, so far as I was concerned at any rate, and the chief and his subordinate immediately set about their preparatory labors. An additional piece of canvas was stretched perpendicularly across the front of the cook-house, at a considerable distance from the other buildings of our encampment. Behind this were taken the pagara, basket, and monkey. What was next done

I cannot say. The black curtain of tarred canvas hung heavy and impenetrable between us and the theatre of operations, and the mysteries of that place are yet unrevealed.

When dinner was fairly under weigh, as we judged from the savory odors which occasionally drifted outward to our domiciles, Monsieur Crapolet came forth, with his large, full face all aglow with pleasurable emotions.

"Ca va ! ça va !" said he, rubbing his hands together, "we shall eat something good to-day—*Thom est un garçon d'esprit.*"

"How does it happen," said I, beckoning him to a seat beside me, "that a gentleman of your talents and Parisian tastes is adrift in such a dreary land as this ?"

"Ah," replied Monsieur Crapolet, "you have touched upon a delicate theme, in consequence of which we will take another coup de petit lait, for, voyez-vous, I have a little weakness on this subject."

"And so you are not a gold-seeker," said I, after we had each taken a refreshing sip of "petit lait."

"In me," said he, striving hard to suppress the rosy twinkle of his eye, and speaking in a melancholy voice, which came strangely out of such a bonhomie mouth, "you behold an unfortunate individual, who has left a land where they have interred all whom he once loved."

"Indeed," said I, trying to raise a tender tone, for in a robust gentleman of fifty this allusion was not so pathetic as I could have desired,—"*an affair of the heart ?*"

"Au juste !" said he, laying both hands upon his bowels in a manner expressive of great pain, and which led me to think at first that our "petit lait" was not the right medicine in his case. "I am here because solitude, hardships, and self-denial—another petit coup of this excellent '*lait*,' if you please—are, as I was about to say, the true remedy for a

lacerated heart. You see, in my younger days I was a susceptible boy. Mon dieu, how my heart used to beat when a bright eye showered its radiance upon me! Sir, if you will believe me, a swan-like neck, or an elegantly chiselled foot, made my knees shake under me. Eh bien! in our village, for I was born in a small village near Paris, there were two demoiselles, between whom my heart was equally divided, Virginie and Mathilde—un petit coup de lait à leur santé.”

Dear, delightful Monsieur Crapolet, he is getting deep into pathos, but if he is not careful the constitutional bonhomie of his nature will run away with him.

“You see,” continued he, after fortifying himself with a copious draught, “that this was a harassing state of things. So terrible did this condition of uncertainty as to the preponderating state of my affections become, that I was forced to fly my country. In a far land, said I, my heart will become tranquil, and be able coolly to choose its future life-long companion. You may believe me, Sir, when I tell you, that I had resided seventeen years in Cayenne, French Guiana, before I fully made up my mind as to which of the two my affections most strongly inclined. It proved to be Virginie, —another coup de lait, s’il vous plait, à la santé de ma chère Virginie.”

“And it was in French Guiana that you made the acquaintance of Thom, our cook?”

“Sir, you are my friend. Thom, too, is an excellent boy, but I beg of you that you will not mention *him* in this connexion. Eh bien, after an absence of seventeen years, I returned to my native land with the intention of espousing Virginie, or, in the event of anything having happened to her, making Mathilde the happy companion of my bosom—and what do you think—I found them both——”

"Dead?"

"Dead! le diable—no, married!"

Here was a climax. I must certainly have mistranslated his remark about interring the objects of his love. I had a strong desire to laugh, and am sure that we should have had "an affair," had not Thom at that moment announced the dinner.

It was served upon a table built in Chagres fashion; that is, upon rough pine boards laid athwart of empty barrels. We had soup to begin with, and various other smoking and palatable-looking dishes. We were all of us pretty hungry, and I believe enjoyed the repast none the less for its mysterious appearance. It was plain enough that Monsieur Crapolet had purged his bosom of a good deal of "perilous stuff" by his confession to me, for he now appeared as a polite Frenchman in full feather, helping the ladies to a bit of roast veal, some of the canvas-back, just a wing of fricaseed chicken, and the like; while the rest of us looked on in amazement, not so much at the variety of dishes which were produced by Thom at such short notice, as to find that his master had a name ready for each.

Now, reader, my belief then was, and still is, that our dinner that day, roast veal, mutton chop, baked duck, fricaseed chicken, stewed brains, petites patés, and whatever else we might have had, all owed its origin to that wounded monkey which I have already alluded to as having been smuggled by Tom behind the canvas curtain. And my reasons are, that, in the first place, he never appeared again in life. In the second place, a monkey's skin and entrails were found the next day at a short distance from camp, directly in rear of the cookery, by a party of disinterested people, who brought the same to us for exhibition. And in the third place, visions of monkeys in the various stages of

frying, stewing, and roasting, came that night and capered gibberingly around my bed; and afterwards I was transported as it were to a lonesome place in the woods, where was a coffin, and a gang of monkeys solemnly digging a grave for its disposal; beneath the open lid of which, too, I shuddered at beholding the well remembered features of our toothless cook—and still later in the night I had a third vision, and another troop of monkeys,—the posterity, doubtless, of these former,—were dancing by moonlight in that self-same woodland spot, singing mournfully but gleefully a well-known Ethiopian melody; and then I remembered that Thom lay buried beneath that green sward, and that he was the “Uncle Ned” of whom they sang as having died in that melancholy “long, long ago.”

During the period that Monsieur Crapolet catered for our party, I think we eat about a monkey a-piece, besides lizards, mud turtles, salamanders, water rats, and anaconda steaks; nevertheless, we did not complain of our fare. To have done so would have implied a non-fulfilment of the condition to which we had mutually bound ourselves. Mr. Sam Weller is recorded as having observed on one occasion that “Weal pie was a good thing when you knew that it warn’t made of kittens.” On our part we went further, and devoured with a keen relish haunches of deer, which we were morally certain was but a kind of *nom de cuisine* for alligators’ tails.

I must also say, in justice to Monsieur Crapolet and his subordinate Tom, that other and plainer dishes were often set before us, and that if we partook of these doubtful viands it was because we preferred them—the greatest compliment which we could have paid to the magic of their cookery.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATIONS FOR A START.

WE had now been in Chagres some ten days ; the camels were sufficiently refreshed after the fatigues of the voyage, to warrant an immediate undertaking of our journey across the Isthmus. We had taken advice relating to the best way of proceeding, and had come to the conclusion to try the land route. We were told that there was a good paved road, lying somewhere on the native side of the river, and continuing along on the same side till near the neighborhood of Cruces, where the stream was easily forded, and beyond which it connected with the old road from Cruces to Panama, which many of my readers have doubtless travelled. The great difficulty about this road seemed to be, the finding it. Some put it as commencing away down at Porto Bello, some as beginning near Navy Bay ; and others were firm in their statements, that it originally started from Chagres. But all allowed that we should hit it if we went back far enough into the bush. If there was any road at all, or any possibility of getting over the ground in this direction, we thought it preferable to trying the river, as the boating of our camels as far as Cruces would be a very expensive and tedious affair.

Accordingly, one fine morning, after a rainy night be it understood, we shook down and boxed our houses, struck our tents, pulled up stakes, and packed everything, including

the cooking-stove and fixtures, upon the camels (*chameaux*, Monsieur Crapolet used to call them). We then bade adieu to the ground of our sojourn, wending our way towards the town. I do not remember that I looked back upon the spot at that time, with any particular emotion. The remembrance of recent annoyances was then fresh, and I presume that the brisk action of our beasts rather led me to look forward with pleasant anticipations, than to an indulgence in sentimental regrets. But now, as I write, it is different.

That spot of earth, in its untamed beauty and luxuriousness, rises up before me like a picture. Yes, I am back again by the great sea-side, with the mountain brook not far away, rushing so passionately yet tenderly to its embrace. There are the old elms, and the long beach in the foreground, and the grand sombre mountains in the rear. There is the well remembered path through the brushwood, leading back to the Indian Village, and beyond, too, up a high hill, where I sometimes went with the Major, and from whence we could discern vessels below our horizon on the beach, bound, on the one tack, it might be to San Juan, or on the other, to Porto Bello. Beyond the river rises a steep rocky bluff, at whose base the waters were always white, whether milky in pleasant play, or livid with rage. And on the hither side is a shady nook, formed by willows growing out of the sand, where the washerwomen, who came from Chagres, were wont to deposit heaps of clothing, rich with the auriferous mud of the Yuba or Feather River. I see, too, the deck timber—fragment of a former wreck, which had been driven thus far landward, during some strong northerly gale, years before—now fixed steadfastly under the shade of these willows, upon whose ragged side, as worn, and weather-beaten, and ragged-looking men, had sometimes come and sat, peering over the deep, and blessing the hairy front which

also frowned or smiled upon their native shores. And the path leading to the town, the path that I daily travelled, in some places, winding back far into the bush, and again curving outward, so as to give a full view of the sea; no "primrose path," and yet much frequented at that time, rich in mud and slimy spots, but still picturesque from its luxuriant borders of alder, mangrove, and palatuvia, chequered as they were on either side with towering palms and coconut trees, with now a straggling ray of sunshine lingering momentarily aloft on their dark green branches, and anon a merry party of rain-drops playfully dancing over them in their downward tramp. These are some of the features of the scene.

Nothing remarkable in all this, you will say. Perhaps not, yet it was something to have the great heaving sea evermore at one's door, muttering like an old fireside crone of unfathomable mysteries; to see it during the long days, in all its many moods, and feel it so near, that one could lay his hand at any moment on its shaggy mane, to watch it darkening beneath the forecoming shadow of night, changing then its tales from the glory of proud navies that had ridden upon its bosom to the sad fate of manly hearts, and rosy smiles, that had sunk and been quenched for ever in its turbulent depths; and to wake during the still darkness or no less solemn moonlight, and hear it yet there, with a more melancholy murmur in its deep voice, as if the dead everywhere sleeping in its bosom, made restless moaning over their lost years of life.

There was an awful grandeur, too, in the recollection, that while all other voices of earth had changed or passed away, this world-reverberating music of the sea had been sounding on evermore the same from the creation; like a deep eternal undertone, stirring the soul in its profoundest depths,

Truly as well as beautifully, has England's woman poet sung :—

“ The Dorian flute that sighed of yore,
Along thy wave is still,
The harp of Judah peals no more,
On Zion's awful hill.

“ And mute the Moorish horn that rang
O'er stream and mountain free,
And the hymn the leagued crusader sang,
Hath died in Galilee.

“ But thou art swelling on, thou deep,
Through many an olden clime,
Thy billowy anthem ne'er to sleep,
Until the close of time.”

And it was something to know, that on the other hand⁴ were the hills, whose fastnesses man had not penetrated, but within whose deep rich glens, and dark shadowy jungles, masses of animal life were revelling and rejoicing, although to our dull sense they rose up silent, solitary, and forbidding—evergreen hills, upon whose summits or sloping sides no snow or ice had ever lain, but where vegetation bloomed and died and bloomed again, and presented always the same perennial front of verdure. It was curious to see how steadfastly but vainly the ocean kept sending its phalanxes of waves to overrun this green domain, and how sometimes the salt from its spray would lodge upon the branches of trees far up the hill sides, and their green leaves and clinging mosses would droop as if poisoned ; and then to see a friendly power rush out from its ambush in the skies—no less than an army of rain-drops, which would do their work so thoroughly, in purifying and cleaning these delicate

dresses of the wood, that each shrub and bush and dark old tree looked all the fresher and more sparkling in the next ray of sunshine which came thither. This water from heaven, in its kindly mission, found its way into the very thickest of the glade, and it was no uncommon thing to see masses of vapor in the early dawn which we might consider as its disembodied spirit, hovering about these green declivities, and gradually soaring heavenward. But why refer to all this—well enough in a poet, which I am not, or a child, which I can never be again: only to show the free and intense style of life which we then led. Because in the breaking up and absence of conventional forms we had seemed to get back nearer to the old mother nature, and lay as it were more tranquilly on her bosom. Our insignificant bodies dwindled as the face of the old mother grew warm, distinct, and loving. What if infection pervaded the air we breathed. Did we not, on that account, feel a kindlier interest in the stars, and the blue arch, and yet love the cheery earth none the less? Can a man evade death by being a coward; and where can he die so well as where sympathies from the infinite heart of the world seem to be drawing him thitherward?

Often since, when stifling in close streets, with the faces of ungenial men hemming me in, or stalled, as it were, in a set form of daily life, a stupid routine of dull duties, have I looked back upon these wild scenes with an inward chafening and pining to be away. It has seemed as if I would give weeks, aye months, of this dull life for a few hours of that.

It has been objected to adventure, that it unfits one for the sober pursuits of life; but who on this account would shut his eyes to the picture of loveliness which the great Father, every morning and evening, unrolls afresh? and

how can he so well see and feel all its wonderful delicacy and eternal beauty, as by shaking off his native sluggishness, and going out in simplicity of heart and habits, to sojourn amid new and unaccustomed scenes? He is, indeed, a pitiful object to contemplate who can live amid the grand, and beautiful, and heroic, either in the natural or moral world, and be none the better for it.

"But this we from the mountains learn,
And this the valleys show,
That never will they deign to hold
Communion where the heart is cold,
To human weal and woe.

"The man of abject soul in vain
Shall walk the Marathonian plain,
Or thread the shadowy gloom,
That still infests the guardian pass,
Where stood sublime Leonidas,
Devoted to the tomb."

There was no lack of heroism in the character of these sturdy, on-pushing gold-hunters; there was grandeur in the unrivalled hardships which they voluntarily endured in this stage of their experience, and sublimity in some of the attending circumstances, for daily at Chagres heaven's artillery thundered forth its salvos, and nightly its lightning flashes were the literal lamp of the voyagers mounting or descending the river.

"Something too much of this." To go on then with my story: On reaching the point we found the few friends who were to come into our party, ready and waiting to receive us. Among these were Messrs. Vale and Parkins, the former of whom had decided, on the whole, that "the camel business was the best thing going," and had fully made up his

mind to stick to it, until something better should present itself. This volatile gentleman was seated in the centre of a heap of baggage, and his conspicuous position would, doubtless, have helped to set off his native advantages, had he not been doubled up like Wordsworth's book-worm. In fact, he was just then engaged in opening a liquor-case containing several descriptions of cordials, besides gin, brandy, and old Jamaica. After drawing forth a couple of bottles successively, holding them towards the sun, and taking a small sip of each, he returned them to his case with a dissatisfied air, and at length produced a third, the color and taste of which seemed to suit. He first threw his head backward, with a jerk, then gave three or four twists of his wiry neck, as many stretchings of his lengthy arms, and at last cleared his throat with a hem or two preparatory to a generous draught. All this time Parkins stood by, looking on with a countenance in which disappointment, contempt, and anger were curiously mingled. When Vale raised the bottle to his lips with the deliberation of a man about to take a final pull, Parkins could restrain himself no longer; bending forward slightly to get into a posture which enabled his hand to reach the coveted flask, he struck it such a well aimed blow as sent the liquor into the nose and eyes, as well as stomach of the thirsty Vale, and then grabbing it as it fell, he, Parkins, stepped nimbly beyond the reach of his companion's sledge-hammer arm.

But the latter was in no wise disconcerted by the abrupt termination of his enjoyment. Rising up, he cast a mildly reproving glance at the retreating foe.

"Solomon," said he, in an affectionate tone, "how often shall I have to caution you against indulging in this love of strong drink!"

"Just hear him!" said Parkins, who had fortified himself

with no homœopathic dose, "he never drinks; oh, no, he *tastes*; except of course, gentlemen, when he has the bilious colic, and that's a complaint he's pretty generally troubled with."

The camels were kneeling, and we had left our seats to superintend the packing of our companions' baggage.

"Whose is all this?" said I, pointing to the heap of trunks, boxes, bags, etcetera, in the vicinity of Vale, "a formidable lot truly."

"That is some of mine," replied Vale, nowise abashed at the implied tenor of my interrogatory, "the rest of it is coming; I have got two natives in my employ since an hour, and nearly half of it is along already!"

"But it is not possible, my dear sir, that you have twice as much baggage as we see here; why, you have already a load for two camels."

"I told him repeatedly," observed Parkins, coming forward, "that he would never get it across."

"It is even so, nevertheless," reiterated the senior partner, "and I do not see that I can well spare anything; but let it be as you say, gentlemen, in that matter."

"What is to be done?" inquired the Major, for it was certainly out of the question to think of lumbering our camels up with this mass of things.

"Sell the superfluous at auction," said Tom, with the ready wit for which he was remarkable.

"Parbleu!" said Monsieur Crapolet, "Je n'ai pas trop—he can well divide with me."

Monsieur Crapolet spoke truly, for the heart of the generous Frenchman was his greatest possession. In point of worldly goods he had but his fowling-piece and ammunition, the contents of his basket, and Thom's pagara, whatever the latter might have been. But as his proposition did not seem to meet exactly the merits of the case, it was unanimously

voted that Tom's plan be adopted, and furthermore, that he should officiate as auctioneer.

When this decision was officially announced, Monsieur Crapolet produced a tin horn from the pagara of Thom, with which he proposed to call the amateurs together musically, on condition of his being allowed two drinks to our one. Vale, who had seemed by his looks to rather demur to the first proposition of Tom, looked even blanker at this second one of Crapolet, but it was carried notwithstanding, without a dissenting voice.

The first case opened, happened to contain books, and the first book taken out was Bowditch's Navigator.

"Here it is," shouted Tom, "a book which ought to be found in every well regulated family; contains particular directions about crossing the Isthmus, also how to make salt water out of fresh (sailors I mean, of course.)—Let's see; here is the title page—'Bowditch's Navigator, Mercator Sailing, short cut from Cruces to Panama,' &c., &c.,—lunar observations, world without end—how much is offered for Nathaniel!"

If my memory serves me right, "Nathaniel" was purchased by a swarthy native, who had evidently been pleasantly excited by the allusion to Cruces and Panama, for the sum of three dollars. The performances of Monsieur Crapolet upon the tin horn had been eminently successful. A crowd speedily collected about Tom and his wares, and the book sales went on briskly.

"The next work on the catalogue," said the auctioneer, "is this splendidly bound edition of Byron, with a life by Bulwer, as the Ethiopian poet says, no less beautifully than truly :

"Oh, Bulwer he wrote William Tell,
And Spokesheare wrote Oteller,
Lord Byron, he wrote wery well,
But Dickens—he wrote Weller!"

"How much for this splendid edition of Byron?"

"Bee-rong!" shouted Monsieur Crapolet correctively. "C'est bien drôle que les Anglais ne peuvent jamais apprendre à prononcer même les noms de leurs poètes les plus distingués."

It is proper here to observe that Sampson Vale had up to this time been attentively watching the movements of the auctioneer, and had not remarked that Thom, at the instigation of his master, had removed the liquor-case from his side, and deposited it carefully within reach of Monsieur Crapolet. But this gratuitous observation of the latter had drawn our attention towards him, and to the great horror of Vale, there he was, this victim of a broken heart, reclining cosily upon a sea chest, with a brandy flask in one hand and a "petit verre" in the other, a perfect Jupiter of good humor and conviviality in the midst of his attendant gods, to whom Thom, with a second flask and "petit verre," officiated in the character of a venerable Ganymede. Strange to say, I noticed Parkins in this group of celestials.

While the Major was superintending the packing of the camels, I strolled up to the "Empire City," partly to get a fresh box of "Wandering Jews," and partly to say good-bye to its brave young landlord.

Vitti was in the dining-room of his hotel, seated at table in company with two others, card-playing. One of his companions was the French nobleman, Count de G——. I suppose the Count had been a winner at the time I entered, for on seeing me, he rose and proposed breaking off the game. This Vitti passionately refused to do, saying that he had lost everything but his hotel and land, and was determined to risk that for what it was worth. They played one more round, and Vitti was a poor man with not a cent in the world.

"Gentlemen," said he, rising, and looking steadily at the Count, "I am ruined ; but it was fairly done. You may consider me as your guest till I can find business."

"Nay," said the Count ; "my dear Angelo, this must not be. Keep your house and lands ; I do not need them. But for your generous aid my heirs would have been ere long in possession of my property, and you had retained yours."

"I scorn to receive pay," replied Vitti, "for doing what I should have been a wretch to have left undone. Nevertheless, for my sister's sake, I will continue here awhile as your agent, till I can repay you for your advances."

"Let it be for your sister's sake, then," said the Count.

The third party present, whom I recognised as the owner of the snake which had bitten Vale, smiled darkly at this arrangement, as if he saw something infernal in the transaction, which pleased him on that account.

"Vitti," said I, as I shook him by the hand on leaving, "this is a wild, lawless country. The only rule of action here, as you well know, is the barbaric one that 'might makes right.' We can't tell what may happen ; but if any trouble comes to you, remember that, for one, I am your friend."

"It's not for myself," replied Vitti earnestly, "that I apprehend anything, at least anything more than my deserts. I am but a reckless vagabond at the best ; my whole life has been a miserable mistake, and it's too late to try to correct it, even if I knew where to begin. But with my sister it is very different ; she is as pure and stainless as a little child. Now, whilst I live, I can protect her to the extent of my life. But if anything should happen to me—you know what I would say, sir."

"I understand you," said I, "and you may be certain that it shall be as you desire ; only let me beg of you to be care

ful of your words and actions for her sake, and not recklessly peril a life which has so much depending on it."

Vitti wiped the tears from his eyes with one hand as he shook mine nervously with the other; and so we parted. On reaching the point again, I found the auction terminated, and several new features introduced upon the face of things.

CHAPTER VI.

EN ROUTE.

EVERYTHING was now in order for a start. The camels were packed, and the barges which were to transport them and us across the river were in readiness at the levee. This being the case, I was somewhat surprised to see the heaps of baggage belonging to Messrs. Vale and Parkins lying still upon the sand, and the camels destined for their accomodation freighted with other packages. It, at first, occurred to me that the former of these two gentlemen had become dissatisfied at the summary manner in which Tom was disposing of his mental food, or the not less summary disposition of his creature comforts by Monsieur Crapolet. I was, therefore, even more surprised to notice upon a second glance the tall figure of Signor Vale, a little apart from the group it is true, but surveying them with a loving and benevolent glow upon his face, and a certain fire in his eye, which flickered brilliantly as it roamed over the entire scene, the while his lips smacked approvingly in token of a most portentous inward satisfaction.

"My dear Vale," said I, approaching him, a little too abruptly perhaps, considering his exalted mood of mind; for I had really come to feel a liking for this curious man. "I trust that we are not to lose the pleasure of your company in our journey across the Isthmus."

"Pretty good!" observed Parkins, who, with a singular

perverseness of mind, evidently understood me as speaking satirically.

"Ah," said Vale, coming to himself, and calling in his wandering fancies with a jerk as it were. "Yea, yea, you speak truly. I shall not be of your party across the Isthmus. Are you aware, sir, that since you left us, but a moment ago, sir, in point of time, a great idea has come to me?"

"Quanto Valley," said Parkins, more savagely than the occasion seemed to warrant, "has had great ideas enough in his lifetime to have ruined the whole world."

"Solomon," returned his companion affectionately, "let me entreat of you not to parade thus the superficial character of your mind."

"As I was about to observe, it has occurred to me in looking over this sandy patch, seeing it in its present state, and reflecting upon its capabilities, that there are great things to be done here. The trouble thus far has been, I opine, the want of a head, one great directing power to see its wants, and with brains sufficient to devise ways and means to meet them."

"Say rather a heart," said a young man who had just joined us; "a great heart teeming with affection, a heart large enough to embrace all these weary people in the folds of its love. Let such a heart make its abode here, seeking nothing, thinking nothing, knowing nothing but the good and happiness of all around it; and do you not think that a bright radiance would go out thence, which would beautify this place even as thoroughly as it would purify it? Now you, sir, were no doubt thinking of draining these marshes, of establishing sanitary regulations, of laying out streets, of founding a hospital."

"Quite right, sir. You see that mountain but little over

a mile distant. Why we could lay a strap rail from thence to the point, put on our dirt cars, and with a few mules, we would bring this whole township high and dry on a beautiful slope. We should in the first place lay alongside of the alcalde and priest, secure a grant, then——”

“Lay alongside of the padre first, get *his* good graces, and I'll guarantee the rest of the jockeys.”

This latter observation proceeded from one of the two gentlemen, who, at that moment, had joined our group in company with Tom. The speaker, whom Tom announced as Judge Smithers, was a large robust man of florid complexion, short square whiskers, blue eyes, a broad head, large nose, and a mouth in which good practical common sense seemed to well up as it were spontaneously. This was the most remarkable thing about the man. He always seemed to have the very item of information or suggestion that was needed rolling upon his tongue, like a choice tit-bit, and had only to open his mouth for it to roll out.

His companion was presented as Colonel Allen, of Missouri. He was not so large a man as the judge, and had a staring kind of face, very red as if from hard drinking. His eyes were large, wide open, and considerably bloodshot; and his mouth, which was also large, was in like manner generally extended beyond its natural limits by an inveterate habit of grinning, which he had probably fallen into when quite young.

“These two gentlemen, and this third, Mr. Arthur Orrington,” said Tom, with a bow towards the young man, to whom I have already alluded, as having objected in a measure to one of Vale's great ideas, “are to join us; and their baggage is already packed in lieu of that of these renegades here, Vale and Parkins. But I am not the boy to interrupt a pleasant story. Pray go on, Mr. Vale.”

"I was saying," continued Vale, "when you came up, that there was a great chance for improvement here."

"I guess you hit it there," said the judge, who, as Tom subsequently informed me, was not exactly a judge in point of law, but was a great judge of horseflesh, and had run the first line of stages from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico.

"The subscriber is ready to make affidavit to that effect," added the Colonel. This gentleman I afterwards learned was a printer by profession, and from his invariably alluding to himself as "the subscriber," am inclined to think that he had been mostly employed in the advertising department.

"Go on," said Parkins, anxious for his friend to arrive at a point where so great unanimity would not probably prevail.

"And, as I was going to say, that having filled up this back marsh here and secured our grant, we should proceed to survey and stake off lots, lay out streets, and in short make a regular land company affair of it. Then we should build a breakwater along here, from the point out, leaving a space between that and the opposite coast suitable for a good ship channel, which we should keep of sufficient depth by steam-sows—if necessary, spile the levee."

"Hold on, old boy," exclaimed the Colonel, "and allow the subscriber to observe, that, in his humble opinion, the levee here bears altogether too great a similarity to a decayed egg to lie in any possibility of spiling."

"Well done, Allen," retorted Judge Smithers, "for a San Francisco editor you are, certainly, wonderfully erudite. By spiling the levee, the *hombre* refers to driving spiles or stout sticks of timber along its banks to prevent caving. Where the 'dosh' is to come from to carry out this idea does not appear as yet,—but doubtless will."

"From New England, Sir, my native place," said Vale majestically.

"Whew!" said the Colonel, snapping his fingers, as if they were either burnt or tingled with cold.

The judge said nothing, but contented himself with humming a fragment of an old song, familiar to our childhood, beginning:

"When I was a little boy, I lived by myself,
All the bread and cheese I got, I put upon the saelf."

"I wish you joy of your mission," said Tom, "and hope you'll stick to it."

"You may bet high on that," concluded Parkins; "oh, yes, he'll stick to it like cobbler's wax to an ile-stone."

It was now time to be off. The bright sun was shining in a clear sky, and it was deemed expedient to take advantage of so unusual a state of things. We left Vale still under the exhilarating influence of his new idea, with Parkins buzzing his monotonous undertone of discouragement under his very nose. Perhaps after all, if our enthusiast had not had this outward, palpable drag upon him, his own nature might have furnished it inwardly; and so with harsh imaginings of possible difficulties and objections, have crushed and stifled its gossamer thread of life, whereas the estimation in which he held the mental character of his associate, rendered him quite regardless of his opinions.

I could not help observing, in the person of our new comrade, Colonel Allen, a remarkably reckless style of dressing and conducting himself. Whether I should have paid any particular heed to this at that time, I do not know, had it not formed so striking a contrast to the costume and deportment of Mr. Arthur Orrington. The latter gentleman had a mild, pale countenance, with a touchingly benevolent

expression, and a soft, affectionate eye. He looked like a man who had no business among the hard, rude, selfish things of life. His dress was scrupulously neat, and severely correct, in point of taste ; so simple in fact as to suggest the idea of a ministerial character in the wearer. You would have known at once upon seeing him, that he had a fixed and certain character of his own, that was made to set its mark somewhere, perhaps gently, even timidly, but none the less firmly and durably for that.

Now the Colonel was got up in altogether another style. He had evidently been battered about the world, and was considerably the shabbier for it. It might have been that some great wrong done to him when young had broken his manly spirit, and made him careless of what fortune might have left for him among her stores ; or, it might have been that he never had any particular character at all, and had fallen into rowdyism, as being the most easy and natural thing to do. He was one of those men who appear always ready for whatever the moment offers, the more outré and bizarre the occupation, the better ; an entire contempt of anything bordering on etiquette or formality, and a perfect freedom from bashfulness or fear, were his prominent characteristics. He was attired in a seedy black dress-coat, with coarse grey trowsers, a blue cloth vest ornamented with brass buttons, stout cow-hide boots, and a hat far gone in dilapidation. It was this crowning head-piece which gave the final touch to his faded and shabby *tout ensemble*, although, from the appearance of his nether garments, one might reasonably have doubted whether he were on his last legs, or merely in his last pair of trowsers. Colonel Allen was, in short, the beau ideal of that numerous class, known as "people not well to do in the world," or "men who have seen better days." How many of this class do we daily meet, and how

few like Arthur Orrington ; for the world is full of blight, and ruin, and decay ; and modesty, charity, and unselfishness are the flowers which grow rarely among its noisome weeds.

We got our camels into the barges, and were seating ourselves to be ready for a start, but Monsieur Crapolet insisted upon Thom's serving out one additional drink. It is, perhaps, hardly fair in me to expose the fact, that our dejected Frenchman and his friends had already drunk the contents of five of the flasks in Vale's liquor-case, leaving but the sixth, which was now to be sacrificed upon the same altar of conviviality. It was a small square flask—as Thom poured the liquor into the quaintly-cut tiny glasses, it glistened and shone in the bright sunlight with a ruby-like sparkle. The rough conclave, whom the doubly bereaved lover had gathered about him, received each his allotted part with a reverential air, except, indeed, our unterrified Colonel from Missouri.

"An extra tot of grog," said he, as Thom handed him his glass, at the same time drawing one hand from his trowsers' pocket, and ejecting from his stained and reeking mouth a huge quid of tobacco ; "the subscriber is open to conviction as to the quality of the liquor."

"It's some kind of French cordial," observed the Judge ; "it takes the French to mystify us in the stomachic department."

"Nothing horizontal about it?" inquired the Colonel.

"I trust not, for your sake," replied the Judge.

"Messieurs," began Monsieur Crapolet, and there was a deep silence while he spoke ; "c'est 'le Parfait Amour.' Whosoever drinks of this cordial finds therein a balm for a broken heart, for it begets within us a love for all the world. It causes us to forget the weariness of life, and helps us with a kindly arm towards our final resting-place."

"Fact," murmured the Colonel, approvingly, with the solemnity of a man listening to a religious discourse.

"Messieurs, nous allons boire à la santé de tout le monde. Yes, gentlemen, this is the distillation of that evanescent spirit of love, which drifts so erratically about the world. Thom, you old villain, fill these gentlemen's glasses again."

Again the liquor, with a glow like that which sometimes hangs faint, yet ruddy, upon Italian clouds at sunset, trickled forth into the stunted glasses, and again Monsieur Crapolet resumed his discourse. It was to be the last drink, for the flask was empty ere the twelfth glass was quite full, and his remarks in consequence took a more melancholy cast.

"Monsieur, je suis un ours, un miserable ours; you will forgive me that I am so dull and unsociable, for I am very unhappy."

In order that the reader may the better understand the full force, beauty, and effect of these last remarks of Monsieur Crapolet, it will be well for him to picture that gentleman, as he then appeared in a posture that would have been recumbent, but for the protecting arms of Thom, with his lower jaw slightly inclined to droop, his eyes now roaming tenderly over the crowd, now cast upwards to Thom's venerable visage, with an expression equalled only in the last agonies of an expiring grimalkin.

"Aye, gentlemen, there is no future for me but what is clouded by the remembrances of the past; there is no peace but in the grave. Hold on, Thom, you scoundrel. Gentlemen, had I married Virginie—ou bien Mathilde—gently, Thom—I shouldn't have been the miserable outcast that you see before you. If it wasn't for Thom here—aye, good Thom—I should be alone in the world. But Thom—aye, yes, Thom—good Thom—kiss me, Thom; one more drink à la santé de—Thom."

And with these words lingering upon his tongue, Monsieur Crapolet was got into the boat, and we at length started *en route* for the native side of Chagres.

Disembarking there, we engaged a small boy, a lithe, long-limbed, straight-haired, Indian-looking little fellow, who came well recommended, to accompany us in the character of guide; after which negotiation, we selected our places upon the camels, and were speedily rocking through the old paved street, and ~~past the~~ wretched bamboo huts upon whose front the religion of the country, expressed in the never-failing motto of "*poco tiempo*," is written in unmistakable hieroglyphics.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRAMP IN THE WOODS.

LEAVING the filthy and ruinous hamlet in our rear, we crossed the brook which divides it from the dense forests and scrubby hills on the north. We cast a last glance at the sea upon our left hand, "spitting in the face of heaven," where its incomings were stayed by the brown old rocks of San Lorenzo, and turned our heads resolutely towards the wilderness of verdure, whose secret chambers we were about to penetrate unbidden.

Why not? What good reason is there to hesitate? Because the shadows congregate there, are we on that account to imagine hobgoblins and such dire personages as haunting the spot? Or do we fear the known and possible dangers? Nonsense! Man goes "down to the sea in ships," and traverses the barren desert, and why should he shrink from the jungle of the dark forest? What is the earth, the whole of it, but the play-ground or the vineyard which our Father has made for the labors and recreation of his children, and there is no bound set beyond which we may not pass. Even if the worst comes, and we are mortally injured by our daring, are we not taken to our Father's house, where our wounds shall be healed for ever? Come on, then.

On quitting the clean hills in the vicinity of the fort, our road at first lay through a dense portion of balata and other timber, where there was but little undergrowth. Here we made good travelling. The soil was firm, and the passage

amongst the trees of ample width to permit our animals to pass with ease. The tall monarchs of the forest shook their evergreen leaves, amid which the wind and birds made music pleasantly above our heads, distilling thence a refreshing coolness ; while beneath our feet the broad flakes of sunlight which lay scattered in irregular little clusters, made the earth to resemble a rich carpet quaintly chequered with green and gold. It was quite inspiring to journey through a country where nature wore so genial and vigorous a front. It is true that we were sometimes reminded of the inevitable lot of all things earthly, by coming suddenly upon the trunk of an old tree, which had fallen from extreme age, perhaps, years before, and which the great ants of the Tropics were carrying off piecemeal, staggering along in Indian file under their load of rotten timber. And sometimes, too, but not often, a decayed and broken branch hung down directly across our pathway, forcing the camels very unwillingly from their straightforward path. If there is an animal to be admired for his undeviating perseverance in what he is pleased to consider his road of duty, it is certainly the camel. Taking it for granted that he is right, he follows up the balance of David Crockett's motto, and goes ahead with an unflinching exactitude. There is something majestic in the way in which he ignores obstacles ; which, be it noted nevertheless, are at times more disastrous to his rider than to his own yielding, but thick-laid hide.

Now it happened that after entering this wooded tract, some of us had dismounted, and were making our way on foot, and it further happened that Judge Smithers and I found ourselves promenading together alongside of the camel which bore the Major and his wife. Behind him rode the disconsolate Monsieur Crapolet, with his faithful boy Thom, marching squire-like at his side. The Major being very tall and straight,

had had one or two narrow escapes of his hair from the low-hanging branches beneath which we were travelling. At length he dropped off and joined our pedestrian party.

"I began to feel," said he, "as if my father's prediction was about to be realized, and that I should indeed live to be hung—but it would have been like Absalom—by the hair."

As the Major spoke, the melody of Monsieur Crapolet's horn, on which instrument of tin that unhappy but tuneful "ours" had been performing some extra shakes for our edification, suddenly ceased, and a fiercely uttered "*sacré !*" in its stead, drew our attention towards the performer. He was in rather a laughable predicament. It appeared that in the satisfaction which he had experienced in the execution of a remarkably successful shake, he had been led immediately afterwards into a triumphant flourish of the instrument itself, and that, reaching his arm at too great a length about his head, it had become entangled in the branches of a tree. Now the camel on which he rode, finding that his rider was in trouble, knelt, according to custom in such cases, leaving our quondam musician hanging—not like Absalom, for, alas, Monsieur Crapolet, as already described, was bald—but in precisely the style in which you often see a sloth clinging, by the day together, with one of his fore legs twisted round an over-hanging limb; and with somewhat of the distinguished grace with which the sloth falls, when the same limb is severely shaken, did our fellow-voyager tumble to the ground. One would have thought, from his plump figure, that he would have rebounded at the touch like a ball of India-rubber; but if the truth must be confessed, Monsieur Crapolet's corporeal frame was at that moment so thoroughly saturated with Maraschino, "*petit lait*," and "*le Parfait Amour*," that he fell flat and heavy as a moist sponge.

"Liquor is down," observed Colonel Allen, with what I

believe is termed a horse-laugh, "now then, stranger, give us some of the low notes."

"It's the old destiny," said the Major, "a man can't be generous and rise to any height of gaiety without suffering afterwards a corresponding relapse. Eve's generosity was the cause of Adam's fall."

"The Major is certainly very clear-headed, and apropos with his biblical ideas," remarked Tom.

"He goes right to the core of things," said the Colonel, with a pleasant smile.

"My opinion is," said the Judge, "that something stronger than cider is at the bottom of this. I don't recollect to have ever met a walking demijohn capable of holding a greater quantity of the stuff."

The unfortunate subject of these remarks was now upon his legs again, thanks to the kind attentions of Thom, and able to answer for himself.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he scrambled back upon his camel, "such is life; to-day we are in the empyrean of prosperity, to-morrow —"

"Floored," suggested Colonel Allen.

"Exactement; as the English Lord Boir-le-grog used to say when in Paris."

"Not Bolingbroke?" queried the Judge.

"Bolingbroke or Boir-le-grog, ça m'est égal—as this famous English lord used to say."

"Excuse my laughing," interrupted Tom, "but really I could not help it, such a droll figure as you cut, sir, hanging to that tree, a martyr to the love of music."

"A man with a horn too much," said the Colonel.

"And then afterwards," continued Tom, "as you lay sprawling upon the ground; oh, it was excellent. If Virginie could have seen you in that position, how she would have pitied you, poor girl."

"Young man," returned the discarded lover, with a mock serious, sentimental air, "you never said a truer thing. It is when in adverse circumstances, that woman loves man best. The great trouble with me has always been that I have been too fortunate in life. Now when I returned to France from Guiana, I had none of the fascinating, bilious hue of the Tropics. Parbleu, I was as fresh and rosy as if I had been leading a gay life among the salons and cafés of Paris. If I had come back, for instance, subject to the fever and ague, and required constant nursing, or showed in my debilitated frame the weakening effects of the Torrid zone, I think I can safely predict who would have been the husband of Virginie, or at all events Mathilde."

"But you said that they were both married at the time."

"True," said Monsieur Crapolet, "I forgot that."

We were nearly out of the timber, as it appeared, and a few paces further on we came into a more open space, through which a stream from the mountains was flowing. We had been gradually rising, as we got over the ground, and now found ourselves upon the brow of a hill, which fell off precipitously before us. It was evident that we had missed the ordinarily travelled path, for we saw at a distance of more than half a mile below us on the river, a number of native women and children, engaged in washing and spreading clothes. I am uncertain which would have made the pleasantest and most striking picture—those dark-skinned half-naked native women, scattered along the banks or squatting upon the rocks, in the very centre of the swift running stream, with the sun-light falling aslant just over their heads, and flooding the opposite hill-side with a golden radiance, leaving their not ungraceful figures clearly defined in the rich deep shade; engaged in an occupation, homely if you will, but "ugly in such a visible

presence of scenic grandeur—or ourselves pausing for a moment on the abrupt brow of the tall acclivity, with the great old trees waving above our heads; our foreign animals and appliances about us, an oriental grouping displayed amid the wild luxuriance of western nature.

“The question now arises,” remarked Judge Smithers, taking a bird’s-eye view of our isolated position, “as to what we are to do next; so far, our young scapegrace of a guide seems to have had it all his own way.”

“There appears to be a down-hill course before us,” said the Colonel, “and the subscriber takes occasion to say that he has never found any difficulty in that.”

Our little imp of a guide was not at all disposed to own up to any deficiency on his part, but kept pointing earnestly to the other side of the ravine, and calling out, “Bueno camino, bueno camino!” This little wretch was certainly the beau-ideal of a young vagabond, as he capered so grotesquely yet airily in our van, cutting wantonly with his long cane-knife at everything within reach, and bursting out every two or three minutes into some wild or plaintive snatch of song. His costume, if not quite complete, was yet partially good, in particulars wherein Thom’s was entirely deficient. It consisted of a bruised and broken hat of plaited straw, and a blue and white striped calico shirt, leaving his lower limbs at full liberty to perform any gymnastic flourishes which might occur to him.

“Bueno camino, on the other side of the river, is it?” said Colonel Allen, “but how in the dragon’s name are we to get there, eh?”

The boy began capering along downward towards where we saw the native women at work, and beckoned us to follow. We were not long in coming to a kind of natural staircase, down which our sure-footed beasts carried us with ease,

and arriving safely on the firm level bank of the stream, we decided upon a halt for lunch. It was a charming spot, cool, shady, with a clean sandy floor, and delicious water bubbling and flowing alongside. A delightful spot to be in, and easy of access on the one hand, but how were we ever to penetrate the bristling wilderness which frowned down upon us from the other?

Lunch over, it was proposed by Judge Smithers that two or three of us, accompanied by our experienced guide, should set out on a reconnoitring expedition in search of a continuation of the road. For all the signs we then saw, it looked far more encouraging for Mr. Vale's "Anaconda line across the Isthmus," than for our less fleet and more cumbersome offspring of the desert. So solemn and determined was the close arrayed front of forest verdure we were to break in upon, that we experienced a presentiment even before setting out, to the effect that we should have our labor for our pains; and accordingly set our Moors to work in unpacking the camels and pitching the tents preparatory to the night's bivouac.

The reconnoitring party consisted of Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, and myself, for our model guide frisked about on his own hook, and I have no question that if the truth were known, we should find that the little villain had been all along diverting himself extremely with our bewilderment. He would plunge at times into the bushes on our right as we travelled down the river's bank, and writhe himself out again a short distance in advance of us, with a delighted glitter in his devilish, bright eyes, exclaiming, "Camino no es bueno," and again skipping on ahead. At length he seemed to have actually made a discovery, for he waited our approach with a satisfied air, pointing his skinny arm towards the forest, and shouting, "bueno camino." And

sure enough, there was a bit of a clearing where he stood, a kind of Spanish mule path—upon which we judged it as well upon the whole to enter. It led through rank growing thickets, up steep piles, as it were, of slippery clay, and down suddenly into ugly-looking if not dangerous gullies. Notwithstanding the profusion of undergrowth, there was no scarcity of the larger trees, with branches and foliage so intersected as to shut out the sunshine as with an impenetrable veil. It seemed from the little puddles which we met at every few paces, that the clayey soil was of such toughness as to hold water for a great length of time, for no rain had fallen since we set out. However, we kept on, staggering, aliding, climbing over the ground, beneath this lowering canopy of green, more from a repugnance which we felt to turning back, than from any faint hope of the road improving sufficiently to warrant our entering upon it with the camels. Our *soi-disant* guide had disappeared.

There was some little amusement, of rather a doubtful kind nevertheless, to be derived from a contemplation of our several bespattered persons and rueful faces. As we picked our way along, stepping into the holes in the path to insure a footing, the muddy water would sometimes spirt upwards to our full height, plentifully baptizing us after the manner of this world. For once in his life, Colonel Allen, of Missouri, so far as his personal appearance went at all events, was pretty much on a par with his associates. But even then, relentless fate was preparing a more thorough baptism, which should restore him to his quondam unenviable position.

The Colonel was the leader of our party, and had now succeeded in scrambling, somewhat crab-like, to the very summit of a particularly slippery eminence. Without stopping to take breath, he commenced the descent, and disap-

peared from our sight as suddenly as if the earth had swallowed him. The next instant we heard a shout, far, far below us, on the other side, and the idea immediately occurred to us that the Colonel had lost his footing, and gone to the bottom by the run. And so it was; for on our reaching the top, and looking down, there he was, sure enough, buried in a swamp, with his head out, puffing and blowing like a struck porpoise. His hat, which had never been one of Genin's best, floated in the slime near him, and he himself, facetious man, was beating the mud with his freed arms, and jerking his body upward, by the action of his legs, for all the world like a boy "treading water." I clung to a bush at my side, that I might laugh with the greater safety.

"This is the end of your down-hill career," observed the Judge, parentally. "Stuck in the mud at last."

"Confound your moralizing," roared Allen, with his mouth full of mud and water, "and bear a hand to help the subscriber out of this infernal swamp."

"Bueno camino," sung out a little squeaking voice from a jungle near by, and our nice young guide presented himself, with an extra suppleness in his entire frame.

"You half-grown cub of a she-dragon!" roared the Colonel again,—"once put the subscriber clear of this, and he'll fix your flint for you."

Whether the boy fully understood the drift of the Colonel's threat, or not, I cannot say, but retiring within the shadow of the jungle, he presently reappeared with a stout limb of balata, which he threw across the swamp, or *quick-mud*, suffering its extremity to rest upon the borders thereof, and again retreated, throwing his head back waggishly, and kicking up his bare heels like a young colt. It is, perhaps, needless for me to add that we never saw him again.

Now the old proverb, that it is much easier to get into a scrape than to get out of one, found no exception in this particular case; and it was only by dint of such gymnastic evolutions as would be set down for caricaturing, should I endeavor to depict them, that the Colonel at last got himself astride of the log, and began edging his way to *terra firma*. Oh, what a laughable plight he was in, to be sure. There he stood, hatless and bootless; his face, hair, and habiliments all of a color, like a miller or coal-heaver, but of a shade which I should describe as a sort of cross between the two.

"Boots gone?" inquired Judge Smithers, with a sympathizing air.

"Boots!" retorted the Colonel, holding out one leg like a darkey fiddler, and steadily regarding the foot thereof; "yes, and stockings too; see here, Judge, just suppose the subscriber to be in the eel business, and to have come across a particularly hard set that wouldn't be skinned nohow, why he'd just take 'em along to one of these Spanish pantanas, and if that wouldn't do their business, set the aforesaid down for a raw sucker!"

"Nonsense, Allen, you know that you were never the proprietor of a pair of stockings. Don't let yourself down to the meanness of endeavoring to attract sympathy for the loss of property which you never possessed."

"It's the way of the world, Judge, as you well know. Old Caleb Balderstone used to say, that a fire accounted for all deficiencies, actual and impossible; and it's rather hard if such a vile, blasted mud-bath as the subscriber has just taken, shouldn't explain some. But never mind that, let's see how you are to get the aforesaid back to camp, since it's pretty certain that you two will have to take turns in carrying him; as to his walking, that is out of the question."

Hère was the boot on the other leg with a vengeance ! There were portions of the road back, which lay over flinty ground, where it would not be easy for a person unaccustomed to the exercise to walk barefoot. On contemplating the prospect, with this new light before us, I must confess that I did not feel quite so strongly inclined to laugh. But the ever-fertile brain of Judge Smithers was equal to the emergency.

"Just fetch that stick along with you, Allen, and when we get to the bad places, you will take the position thereupon termed, in military parlance, 'as you were,' and we'll carry you into camp, the latest living personification of riding on a rail !"

There was nothing for it, under the circumstances, but to retrace our steps. The sun was almost down, and deeper and darker shadows crouched in every thicket. As we travelled backward, we were several times in danger of missing our way, though, thanks to the elastic surface of the clayey ground, we had more falls than bruises. When we finally got clear of the wood altogether, and entered the open valley, where was our camp and friends, it seemed like getting home again. We could not help feeling the calm, quiet, cloudless repose in which the spot seemed to lie, as if it were a reflection of the clear bright sky, imparting to our harassed bosoms a portion of its own serenity. The large, round moon was squandering upon every thing within view, its treasures of silver light, giving to the dark woods, the climbing hills, and the sparkling river, a rich, mellow, yet half unreal loveliness. In a little dot, as it were, of this magnificent picture of still life, were seen the white tents and moving figures of our camp, with a curling wreath of smoke ascending from the rear of a broad, black curtain.

A few moments more, and we were in the midst of this picturesque group. Oh, such side-splitting shouts of welcome and laughter, when we unceremoniously spilt the mud-coated Colonel from his novel hand-barrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER DINNER.

DID the reader infer, from what has been said, that Monsieur Crapolet was at all overcome by liquor, or transported out of his ordinary state on this occasion! If so, the writer must plead guilty to having led him into error, for I now distinctly recollect, that on our return to camp the chief of the culinary department was fulfilling his duties with the most scrupulous and clear-headed exactitude.

And in due time appeared Thom, his shiny black shoulders, chest, and arms, streaked with lines of rolling perspiration, bearing various steaming and truly savory dishes for dinner. This Thom of ours had a way of rolling up the whites of his eyes, that was quite startling, and seen in the moonlight, curiously impressive. If it be true, as suggested by a recent philosophic writer, that a negro is "kind of cross between a monkey and a man," I shouldn't wonder if this Thom did feel at times some rather quaint twinges, at his peculiar way of introducing the two races. But he was a taciturn old fellow, who loved his solitary pipe better than anything else, and whenever I mentioned my suspicions to him, he would cut me short by a most emphatic "Ah-wah!" uttered in a querulous, half angry tone, as much as to say "now don't bother me—get out!"

Dinner was over, and such a dinner!—A few days afterwards, when we were going up Chagres river, and I saw a

great, awful, lazy, mud-brown alligator, lying out so patriarchally under the immensity of over-hanging foliage, the uncouth impersonation, as it were, of the pestiferous vapors and noisome atmospheric ingredients of that fatal river, it seemed to me, rather a quaint fancy to be sure, but he did actually bring to mind, so stately and lonely as he was, the image of old David sitting between the gates, and inquiring for his progeny. "Have you met my young alligators?" he seemed to say, and certain compunctious gnawings of the intestines made answer, "We have seen and eat them."

But at any rate dinner was over, and "what was *eat* was *eat*, would it were worthier." We were lying about in groups, smoking of course—everybody smokes on the Isthmus. It was a bright, balmy, mellow evening, such as is only seen within the Tropics. There was a peculiar softness in the air that was delightfully grateful to our weary frames, bathing us, as it were, in a delicious vapor. It was one of those evenings when the gay greenery of earth, entwined and festooned in every possible shape of fantastic beauty though it be, is forgotten in the sublime appreciation of siderial beauty; when every flitting of the summer wind awakens harmonious responses in the topmost boughs of the tall trees; when the round moon is a well remembered friend, speaking to us silently of early innocent pulsations; when the very birds, penetrated by the still loveliness of the hour, "murmur in their dreams of the dim sweetness fitfully;" when earth is remembered only as a land of calm and holy joys, and heaven itself seems not so very far away; when the drifting fleecy clouds seem but the white-robed spirits of our young departed comrades, beckoning us thitherward; when we feel ourselves so transfigured by the genius of the hour that we only wonder why our wings are wanting and we cannot follow them.

I remember having left our party for a moment's solitary stroll. Such times never fail to call up memories of all the old times that had any features in common, and now I was reviewing specially some of our nights upon the desert, where the same soft sky and the same pale moon was over us, but how different the surroundings; there nature was clad in such severe, almost bald simplicity; there she wore such eternal calmness on her oriental front, as if there were no deeds within her placid bosom to hide from the pure gaze of those fair stars above; and here were such turbulent and luxurious forms of beauty. How the whole earth throbbed and heaved with the fresh vigor of its vegetable life, and crowded out its progeny of green things into the upper air, like a great army. Its tangled and almost impenetrable front, yet wrought into shapes of strange beauty in all its thousand lines, the home and dwelling-place of serpents, wild beasts, and gay-plumaged birds, was typical in its massive headlong growth of that people who were bearing empire on their rough shoulders away from the sluggish patriarchal East.

Musing somewhat in this wise, I had come suddenly upon a little open space where the moonlight was falling in between the branches in spray-like gushes. I threw myself upon the ground, and was startled at hearing a voice close behind me—it was Arthur Orrington, at prayer.

He was praying that he might feel the proper solemnity of the act, and bring himself into a mood when he would feel it no blasphemy to ask communion with God, and he went on to pray that in the presence of God, he might find strength to gain victory over that sin that was growing upon him, and to realize that a good and great God was before him, real and eternal beauty, God's love, and even more.

worthy to be loved and coveted than his thought manifest in forms of beauty, and that he might, in time, become impregnated with a portion of that goodness even, which is God, and so begin to grow for ever into his likeness. Then as I was stealing off, for the wonderful solemnity of his thoughts and language overpowered me, I heard him thanking God for those words of Christ, when he said that the highest evidence of attachment a man could show to a friend, was to lay down his life for him.

Prayer! it is a sacred and hallowed thing. It is the highest, most blessed privilege vouchsafed to mortal man. It is the one thing which more than all other things proves him to be indeed but little lower than the angels, the one God-recognised link connecting the mortal with the immortal. So long as man can find the heart to pray he is not lost. But prayer is too holy a thing to be made light or common of. It seems to me that not often in man's life should he dare to exercise that awful prerogative in its fullest sense; not but that his life should be one constant prayer of praise and gratitude, but shown in his life, and not in words. Yet in times of great peril how soothing, how ennobling to be able to look up and say, "God help us!" and after a miraculous escape, what emotion so exquisite as that which accompanies the heart-uttered, "thank God!" as it goes on wings of gratitude straight to the eternal throne. These are the prayers which work out a man's salvation.

Earnestness and sincerity always command respect, whatever may be the circumstances under which we behold their development. No matter how absurd or visionary may be a man's aim in our estimation, yet if we see him firm, straightforward, and persevering, and feel, besides, that he is really in earnest, we involuntarily fall back to let him pass, and to follow him with a certain sentiment of admiration, which

we are hardly willing to acknowledge to ourselves. And if so be his course conflicts not with our own, but leads above it, and in its brilliancy reflects a certain light upon ours, then we breathe blessings upon the path which blinds and dazzles us. I have done no justice to the prayer of Arthur Orrington in the woods. The language in which his thoughts were clothed was as pure and grand as they. Surrounded as I had been for so long by those whose struggle was for the forms of life, this expression of a soul which asked for something more, even for the true essence of existence, overcame me with a profound solemnity. The great reality of this man's purpose made me feel as if the rest of us were chasing shadows. I think I must have carried my impressions pretty plainly on my countenance, for when I returned to camp, Colonel Allen, who was the first to observe me, called out defiantly that "the subscriber was ready to bet the drinks for the crowd, that the new-comer had met a ghost."

"Speaking of ghosts," said Tom, "what a ghostly place the old fort at Chagres is!"

"Aint it?" said the Colonel abstractedly.

"But have you really seen a ghost?" inquired Mrs. Wallack, who took great interest in things supernatural.

"No," said I.

"Then," observed Judge Smithers, "Allen has lost the drinks."

"Agreed," said Allen. "And speaking of the old fort and drinks in connexion, the subscriber takes occasion to state to the crowd that he is the proprietor of a most extraordinarily cobweby bottle, found by the aforesaid while on a voyage of discovery in said fort, which cobweby bottle is supposed to contain some excellent old Cognac, something probably prior to the time of Otard."

"I suggest that the subscriber produces the same without further prelude," said Tom.

"Now then, Allen," observed the Judge, "here is a chance to clear up your character somewhat. If this little story of the bottle *should* turn out to be true, it will be a perfect God-send to you, and like charity, cover a multitude of lies. Produce the Cognac."

"But that State House story—" began Allen.

"We will have another time," continued the Judge; "and now for the brandy."

Upon this, "the subscriber" began to stir his stumps, and proceeded towards Thom's apartment, as if there was really a bottle of brandy to be brought forth. It seemed at any rate that he had got to the right shop, in one sense, for throwing up his hands in consternation, as he looked behind the black curtain, he uttered these memorable words—

"The subscriber takes occasion to be astonished."

Then plunging desperately from our sight, he presently re-appeared, bearing in his clutches the unfortunate Monsieur Crapolet, who was presented to us as a culprit taken in the act of drawing the cork from Allen's cobweby bottle. Poor Crapolet! he had the corkscrew inserted just ready for a pull, and I really believe the lachrymose lover was very thirsty, for he eyed the bottle longingly, while Colonel Allen harangued him as follows:—

"Miserable Frenchman, you are truly worthy to be ranked with the man spoken of in Scripture."

"Where?" inquired Judge Smithers.

"In Scripture," said Allen triumphantly, "spoken of in Scripture, of whom Solomon in his wisdom said, 'thou art the man.'"

"Let me see" said the Judge, "what was the beginning of that story?"

"The subscriber will be proud to enlighten you on the subject. A rich man once gave a great dinner."

"Ah, yes, who was it?"

"I don't exactly recollect that part of it," said Allen, "but I think it was Solomon—if not—Saul."

"But they were not contemporaries."

"We won't argue that point," said the Colonel.

"Well, go on," said the Judge.

"This man then—"

"Who?"

"Saul—this man Saul, had plenty of everything for dinner: Mulligatawny soup, boiled cod-fish, oyster sauce—roast beef, goose, turkey, venison, wild ducks, lobster salad, chicken fixens, in fact a good dinner."

"What book do you find that recorded in, Allen?"

"What book? Scripture. Well, he had everything, this old King Solomon, everything but mutton. He would not have noticed this, if it had not ha' been for an old chap, a particular friend of his, named Jeroboam, who observed on taking a glass of port with the King, that *such* port wouldn't be a bad accompaniment for boiled mutton and caper sauce."

"My impression is," said Tom, "that it was roast mutton that was called for."

"We won't argue *that* point," said the Colonel, "so he calls one of his men—John, says he,"—

"Never mind the rest of the story," said Judge Smithers, "there is such a passage in the Bible as, 'Thou art the man,' and from your knowing that, I thought it possible that you might have read something in the book when young."

"Parbleu, he got my measure that time, sur la gauche," said Monsieur Crapolet, shrugging his shoulders, "for certainly, I furnished an excellent dish of mutton three times a week."

"Revenons à nos moutons," said Tom, "to the bottle."

"To the bottle," repeated Allen, applying himself to withdrawing the cork. In this department of industry, the dilapidated colonel was unrivalled, extracting the cork, and holding a glass in his left hand, and the bottle in his right, he proceeded, as he thought, to turn out the liquor.

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower—its bloom is shed."

And so although "the subscriber" held the bottle quite correctly in a horizontal position, nothing issued therefrom.

"Come come, Allen," said Judge Smithers jocosely, "you've gone through the motions very well, and we'll let you off with that."

"But the subscriber protests—" began Allen, quite fiercely.

"It was only some kind of light wine, very likely," said Tom soothingly.

"But there is yet something in the bottle," observed the Major, taking it out of the hands of Allen, who remained quite aghast at the very unpleasant termination of the affair.

"And it is a roll of manuscript," continued the Major, who had now broken the bottle, and produced from among the fragments a sealed package, which certainly bore external evidence of being manuscript.

"Ah!" said Allen, coming forward with a brightened air, "who knows but this is the identical bottle which Columbus threw overboard the night he discovered America!"

"Which was washed up into the old fort by some unusual freak of the waves," suggested Judge Smithers; "but there are records which allude to the article thrown overboard by Columbus on a certain occasion as a keg, and not a bottle."

"We wont argue *that* point," said Allen, "but will have the paper read, and the subscriber would suggest that Mr. Eddington read the document aloud."

"If you mean me," said Tom, "and it is the general desire—I shall be most happy to officiate."

"What is the title of it, Tom?" inquired somebody.

"It don't appear to have any," said Tom, "but begins quite abruptly."

"I hope it's funny," said somebody.

"The subscriber stands ready to bet the drinks it aint," said Colonel Allen.

"Of course it isn't," said Judge Smithers, "nobody would think of sealing anything funny up tight, and putting it into a bottle."

"Well then," said Allen doggedly, "the subscriber will bet the drinks it is."

"But you hav'n't paid your last bet, Colonel," said Judge Smithers.

"We wont argue *that* point," said Colonel Allen; "read on, Tom."

Whereupon Tom proceeded to read what the reader of this narrative will find in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOTTLE MANUSCRIPT.

GOLD, what a strange thing it is! I do verily believe that it is the concentrated, solid essence of the world's lost sunshine.

What power does it not possess?

Power—it needed not a voice from the depths of another world to tell us “to be weak is to be miserable.” This is one of the eternal laws of being, and it is only the fool who wilfully sets it at defiance.

To be powerful, on the other hand, is to be happy; and gold is power. Knowledge is not—virtue is not—gold is!

And now gold is mine!

Yes, mine; and lies here within reach of my arm, as silent and clod-like, in these hundred mouldering and black old kegs, as if it were the merest bits of yellow metal, instead of a fresh and rosy god, with an arm whose beck should bring greatness and glory, like willing slaves, to its side; and a voice seductive as a siren's, winning within its charmed circle, all intoxicating essences of life, love, beauty, flattery.

Mine, with a certain condition, it is true,—a condition made by the lean, fallow, mildewed old keeper, who shoved me into this glorious fortune—that I am to remain here without communication with the world for twelve months; and then to go forth master and owner of it all—not all the

world literally—but yet in fact, since being owner of this gold will make me master and owner of all the best of it.

A hard condition truly ! The shrivelled hermit is little of a man to have supposed it possible, that there could have been any hesitation on my part, in complying with his proposal. As if I hadn't had good reason to know its terrible—its ineffable worth.

As if I hadn't for so many years been plodding along the world's miry paths, looking downwards mostly, that I might not see and envy the gorgeous robes, the buoyant bearing, the proud, self-sustained, triumphant looks ; and with my ears shut, that I might not hear the rattling din of the gallant, merrily bedecked equipages of those favored mortals, who had what I had not—gold.

As if the want of it had not made me come to doubt even my right to a place in a world where it was the one good and needful thing.

As if I had not been a very leper, as it were, in the social world, and seen my old friends and associates shrink back at my approach, drawing their garments closer about them, and whispering to one another, "unclean, unclean !" and all for the want of it.

As if I, myself, hadn't at times slunk away, and getting to a secret place, alone with my Maker, sat coolly down to ask him why it was that he had made me; and placed me in a world where gold was everything, and without which there was nothing—and yet given me none of it.

As if truth and bravery, and love and honor, had not become to me as mere stiff, cold corpses, except as the smiles of this sunny god shed life and beauty over them.

As if—pshaw !

I remember once being in the principal street of a great

city. It seemed to me like a holiday; everybody was moving rapidly along, talking, laughing, and to the first glance of a superficial eye, appeared gay and happy. Men, women, and children were freshly and tastefully habited, and between these living lines of pleasant faces and graceful forms, horses and vehicles, proudly caparisoned, or glistening like polished mirrors of many brilliant hues, were rattling to and fro, exciting by their gallant action a livelier heat in the general pulsation. The shop windows, with their large clear panes, were rich and attractive in all elegant and costly fabrics. In the brilliancy of the *tout ensemble* of the scene, I quite forgot that the real proprietors of its glitter and magnificence were but a few, and that the many saw it but with blight and bitterness of heart, hating themselves for the very envy which it excited. I revelled and basked in its serene brightness, and felt glad in being a part of such a world.

But the reaction came when I looked at the separate parts of which the whole was composed.

A man was walking directly before me, leading by the hand a little girl. The man was poorly dressed, seedy, pale, haggard, and the little girl was likewise poorly clad, but with locks of dark wavy hair, in which delicate threads of sunshine seemed to mingle; a full fresh happy face, the pure good eye of a young angel on God's errand, and a form of light and beauty, "that might have walked unchallenged through the skies."

It was natural that all the rich and beautiful things of earth should be hers—that she should have but to will, and they should fall about her like a fitting vesture, which she would wear with the unconscious grace and dignity of the old divinity of right. It seemed to me as if the highest possible use to which all the best and most beautiful of this

world's possessions could be put, would be to lie down at her feet and ask in winningest tones to be thought beautiful by *her*. Oh, with what a sudden wrench was this delicious idea torn from my mind! For to realize that anything could be wanting to gratify her pure and child-like wishes, was to feel that this world was all miserably wrong, and that the face of mother nature, and the not less divine countenance of her best beloved, Art, were but false and vain.

"Papa," said she, letting her words fall liquidly and clearly, as if they were indeed little globules of sound, floating outward and upward from her soul, and alive with some of its own pure essence, "how swiftly and grandly the carriages go by, the horses seem to have hidden wings. Oh, I would so like to ride."

The father scowled—a scowl of black, fiendish malignity, that cast a horrible shadow over the wide street, and fell with a deep plunge into my soul like a ball of ice. The child did not see it, but went tripping on, in a circle of light that was brighter and better than the sun's, because it reflected outward from her own heart.

Next they paused a moment to look into a shop window, where costly designs in gold and silver were displayed.

"See, papa, that beautiful little silver castle," said the child again, "I should like it for my wooden soldiers;" and receiving no response, she added quickly, as if in divination of the reason, "but I can't have it, you know, because it costs more money than you have got, and so I do not really want it, dear papa."

And then because he made no answer to her childish prattle, but hurried her silently away with him, then I hated him, and cursed him heartily for a mean despicable thing. I had no pity for his broken spirit, his wasted manhood, his lost aims of life, I only saw that he was weak, where

he should have been most strong, and in my stunned misery, I uttered a silent but earnest request that God would give me death, and after that the agonies of hell, rather than that I should ever be the means of denying to youth the enjoyment which is its eternal heritage.

How often since has the vision of that little girl with her great soul-lit eyes come up and mingled with my dreams! What, if through her own poverty and the machinations of the rich she went astray in after years, and so lost that heaven which was her birthright? Yes, and what if there should be no other and better world than this, and no God anywhere but—gold!

"Here is a break in the manuscript," observed Tom, looking up from the papers, "and when it continues the handwriting is somewhat changed."

"As if the ink had thickened by exposure in that devilish hole," suggested the Judge, looking over the reader's shoulder.

"Never mind; go on, Tom."

And Tom went on to read.

What a magnificent position is this of mine! I am overlooking the bustle and ridiculous activity of my fellows in their heated search for what I have only to lie back awhile, and then coolly take possession of. It is true that my window has a villanous grate over it, and if it hadn't, there is little probability that I should be in a hurry to part company with these old kegs, and take a precipitous plunge from an elevation of several hundred feet into the Chagres river, or upon the sharp-pointed rocks along its margin. But it is, nevertheless, very soothing—tickling, I think, is the better expression, to watch from thence the crowd as they land, and afterward go up river, and again to see as great a crowd returning, wayworn, sick, and after all with but the

merest handful of what is piled in great masses by my side.

The only idea that troubles me at all is that I am getting it too easy, and shall consequently not appreciate it as I ought; twelve months, how quick they will roll away in pleasant anticipations!

"Is there much more of it?" asked Colonel Allen, who held a pack of cards in his hands, upon which he was, as it seemed unconsciously, performing some curious mechanical operations with a kind of double-headed scraper, such as changing at a single rasp trays into aces, and villanous jacks into very respectable queens, simply by taking off their caps.

"Not a great deal," said Tom, drawing attention to the Colonel's innocent amusement, by a wink, and reading on.

Last night it was raining heavily; I collected some bits of wood and fragments of hoops, that were scattered about the floor of my cell, or rather room, and built me a nice little fire. It was very cheery. As I sat rubbing my hands over the blaze, I could not refrain from chuckling over my fortunate lot, in looking forward to the time when I would have a hearthside of my own, and the gold which should buy all the appliances to make it so very cosy and comfortable. Long after it had all burned out, and I was sleeping soundly on my blanket stretched upon the kegs, I was awakened by a distant shouting; I got up, and there was a broad glare of light dashing into my chamber. It came from the American side of the river, where a house was on fire, and by its flashing gleams I could see the hurried and anxious forms of men, some of whom were being made beggars by its fitful freaks. It was emblematic of my own gold.

Gold, thought I to myself, it is like the yellow flame, so quiet and helpful a servant, so kind and companionable a

friend, but when roused and bending its energies for evil what a very terrible demon it is !

Well, let it be a demon ; let it work its freaks and its torments, I have seen poverty do worse.

I was once riding in a rail-car on a long route ; amongst other passengers I noticed a young woman enter with an infant in her arms. I did not particularly notice the young woman at first, but I could not help observing the child, and thinking to myself how like a little cherub it was. It was a boy. I knew that at once, from its fearless smile and self-relying air. But bye and bye I also noticed that the mother—it was easy enough to make out that she *was* the mother—looked strangely at her fellow travellers, almost glaring at them with meaningless (to me, at any rate) bright eyes ; and I further observed, for now I began to watch her curiously, that her expression changed most vividly and earnestly as she looked into her little one's face and watched its happy triumphant aspect. It was as if she were turning away from a broad bleak desert, or a wide, wide dreary sea, to a little sunny spot of earth that was her home ; but the love that shot as it were from her eyes had in it a glitter so deep and dazzling, that it impressed me with a strange sensation bordering even upon terror. There was a small private room in the car where we were riding, and with a shrinking glance at the rest of the company she withdrew thither, clinging passionately to her feeble little charge ; I remember that a quaint sort of thought came to me as she retired from our observation ; what if that babe should die ? the tiny hillock over its bones would be to that dreaming mother a mountain which she could never pass, and the great world would never be tenanted by her again.

Well, we rode along, and when we arrived at our journey's end, I had forgotten all about the mother and her

babe, but as I was leaving the car, the door of the private room suddenly opened and the mother came forth, *alone*. I watched her a moment to see her go back for her child, but she kept steadily on towards the steps of the car preparatory to getting out.

"Madam," said I, accosting her, "you have left your babe behind."

"Yes," said she coolly, "he is many miles behind us. See here. My little boy was happy to-day for a moment, and was dead before the fever flush passed off. I did it. I was coming here, you see, to a new place without money or friends; coming to continue my old life of sin and wretchedness—a life of which my boy was as yet utterly unconscious—so when we were passing an open spot in the woods up which some birds were idly fanning themselves along, and he was twittering and beating his little arms in very sympathy, then I seized suddenly on all the misery and desperation of years, and compressing it to a little circle within my hands, tightened it about his tender neck and strangled him thus, and then threw him after the birds into the woods; and there he is sleeping for ever without ever having had to taste one drop of the agony which is my daily drink. Now let them do with me what they will, I have conquered my last weakness—I lost heaven long ago—what right have I to hanker after one of its holiest joys?"

This was another terrible mystery to me in God's providence.

"Here is another break in the manuscript, indicated by several lines of asterisks," said Tom, pausing in his reading.

"From which we are left to infer," observed Judge Smithers, "that the author might have given us some better thoughts yet, if he would but have taken the trouble to pen his inspiration."

"Pray go on," said Colonel Allen.

And Tom went on.

I am half-sick to-day, and quite down-hearted. Last night I was very restless. I awoke about midnight. The moonbeams were shining clear and pale across my chamber. I had an unpleasant fancy come over me, that I was lying upon a heap of human bones, instead of my kegs of gold. Even when I got up and moved off a little to take a fairer view, I could not quite get rid of the idea. These black kegs did look dead, rotten, and kind of devilish too, in the holy moonlight.

Some hours afterward while I was lying on the damp stone floor, I felt something crawl over my breast; I jumped up hastily, and thought I saw the retreating form of a snake writhing through a hole in a corner of the room. I must have been mistaken about this, as to-day I can find no trace of any hole or crack—but the idea was real enough to spoil the balance of my night's rest. I did so long for daylight, that I could have shouted for joy when I saw the first rays of the sun fall aslant upon the red roofs of the Chagres houses. How I fretted to be over there only for a moment, just to have a cup of coffee at "Old Joe's," or a drink with one of the boatmen!

What if gold should not be the highest good after all? There would I be trapped in a mean position truly!

But I happened to know for a certainty that it is. I had a brother once who died suddenly and miserably, as if he had been stung by a serpent, because he could not or would not bow himself down and worship gold as the chief thing.

It happened in this way. He was my elder brother and a merchant. In his early life he had been wonderfully successful in his ventures. Like old Midas he seemed to

have the golden touch, but he did not prize it as Midas did. On the contrary, he was free and profuse in his expenditures. He married young, and at the time of his death had about him a large family of little children. It's the old story of misplaced confidence that killed him. When the truth came home to him, that men sought after and loved for its own sake, what in his eyes was but dross in itself, and only valuable for what it might aid in effecting; that gold was to be considered as an end and not a means; that he had been buying friendship and respect, when he had all along supposed it to be the voluntary tribute of loyal hearts; that he must give up all his wealth and luxuries, and see himself and wife and little ones become beggars, or else turn crafty like the rest; then it was that his great heart sank within him, and he shut himself up in his own house to die. He was not angry with fate; he did not immure himself thus to spite her, but because his overflowing love and sympathy had gone out and spread itself widely about the world, and had all of it come back chilled and dying, because he recognised in himself a monster who had wilfully preferred honor to selfishness, and brotherly kindness to gold; and because he felt that it was too late for him to wean himself from the great folly of his early manhood, and learn anew the ways of men; this was why his great eyes grew dim and downcast, looking inward with a strange misgiving expression, and his broad clear manly brow, which used to be so calm and noble, became knit and clouded, and he could nowhere find strength to bear up against the fatal consequences of his error.

He died—and I shall never, never forget the day of his burial—so storm-drenched, woe-begone, and God-forsaken as the world seemed that day. But if it had been literally the sunniest one that Nature ever wove her smiles for, it

would have been the same or worse, even, to me—for now it was as if the old mother groaned at the departure of a noble son. And yet it was truly a terrible mistake of which he died.

That night I lay awake for a long time, listening to the howling storm, and wondering where my brother then was, he who had nursed me when a sick boy, and instilled into me in later years, a portion of what I then thought his glorious philosophy. At length I slept. It was late the next morning when I awoke, and now I remember as if it were only this morning that I had seen it; how different was the face of nature from the previous day. The weather had grown quite cold; and over the fields, and on the house tops and fences, and on the branches of trees, lay a vesture of the purest white. Oh! how serene and happy I felt for the moment, for I could not dissuade myself from the fancy that the bare and desolate earth had donned that snowy robe to typify the white raiment which my brother was then wearing among the angels in the new world, whither he had gone.

Ha! what if I should die within these slimy walls, by the side of these rotten kegs, there would be no vesture of snow above my grave!

Here Tom ceased to read, and rolled up the manuscript, to the great relief of Colonel Allen.

"An abrupt termination," remarked the Major.

"He had probably got to the end of his paper," said Judge Smithers.

"It is evidently written," continued the Major, "by some outward-bound Californian, ambitious of appearing in the Magazines, under some such bold heading as 'Manuscript found in a bottle, in one of the dungeons of San Lorenzo!'"

"It has some good things in it," said the Judge, "and is

exactly what a man would *not* have written under the circumstances."

"What do you make of it?" inquired I of Colonel Allen, who was mechanically shuffling the pack of cards, to which allusion has already been made.

"Nothing at all," said the Colonel; "it is neither high, low, Jack, nor the game."

"I propose," said Monsieur Crapolet, with a shrug of his shoulders, intended to awaken "the subscriber" to a sense of his duties, "that as we have abstained for a long time, probably with the view to please somebody, we now treat ourselves to a glass of punch all round."

CHAPTER X.

THE PADRE.

ON the following morning, which I then believed to be Sunday, although I kept no "notched stick," we struck our tents and took up our line of march back to Chagres. We had come to the conclusion to try the river route as far as Gorgona. So following along the banks of the philanthropic stream, which is the one redeeming feature in old Chagres, we at length found ourselves in the outskirts of the town, without observing any visible signs of its having changed much during our absence. Neither do I now recollect that there was any particular evidence of its being the Sabbath. Stay—there was one old crone exciting a brace of formidable-looking cocks to a little frisky skirmish by way of a whet, and on my venturing an observation on the subject to Colonel Allen, she favored us with an explanatory remark—"Hoy, no es domingo, señor!" which certainly there was no denying.

We pitched our camp, this time, a little in the rear of Main street, not far from Senor Ramos' house. I mention Senor Ramos' house in this place as a point of departure, because a good many years ago—several years, in fact, before the discovery of the California gold mines—when I was at Cambridge, and in that staid locality found great relief in dipping into records of travel and adventure, it chanced that I lit upon a very entertaining description of a journey from

Chili to Jamaica, via the Isthmus of Panama, published in one of the British Magazines.

The writer had been particularly cautioned, while at Cruces, about exposing himself to the night air in Chagres, by a Spanish gentleman residing at the former place, of whom, by the by, he relates the following characteristic anecdote. That having, as a consequence of a letter of recommendation from the British Consul at Panama, charged him rather moderately for his night's lodging, he indemnified his finances for this effort of honesty, on the following morning, by giving him in exchange for his doubloons, some spurious coin, which the writer was only able to dispose of afterwards in the way of gratuities to necessitous persons. This very respectable, business-like gentleman condescended to inform him in quite a confidential manner, that there was *one* house at Chagres where he would be comparatively safe, but that he must on no account put his head out of doors during the night, or immediate death would be the result. This wonderful mansion, which could thus hold out against the King of Terrors, was the house of Senor Ramos, and was air-tight. Accordingly the writer goes on to say—I have got the gist of his narrative, although my memory does not retain all his happy expressions—that all that day as they floated down the beautiful, but alas, often fatal river of Chagres, the image of Senor Ramos' air-tight house was ever before him. This Senor Ramos—what a man he must be, too, to have the only air-tight house in a place where a residence in any other kind of house was sure to terminate fatally in a short time. To reach *his* house before night-fall was salvation; to fail thereof, was to become food for alligators.

Well, the writer goes on to describe most graphically how they did finally arrive at Chagres, but long after the sun had set, although he had been spared all the horrors of anticipa-

tion by having fallen asleep just before the disappearance of that every-day luminary. He was aroused from his slumbers by hearing a splash or two in the water alongside, and becoming fairly awake, found to his unutterable consternation, that his dug-out was fast on a mud bank, and that his natives had absconded—"a way they have"—leaving him to take care of himself and luggage. It was probably quite late, for there were no lights to be seen on shore. What was to be done? The man of the air-tight house, how was he to be come at? Would he venture to open his door at such a time, for surely a gush of air would pour in, killing his innocent wife and darling babes! But then for the writer to breathe nothing but this air all night—impossible.

So he goes on to say, that at that solemn hour, "when all around was still," he set himself to work in bellowing most emphatically the name of Senor Ramos, thinking that as he was a man of consequence, this éall must surely be attended to by somebody. By and by a man came down and inquired "Por el amor Dios, que hay?" This man was immediately bought up to go and kick vigorously at Senor Ramos' door and inform him—Ramos—of the writer's situation. But, alas, he speedily returned with the melancholy tidings that Senor Ramos was not in town (where *could* he have been, by the by?), and that the family would not open the door at that time of night for mortal man. So our hero betook himself to an Englishman's invariable preventative for malarial diseases, the drinking of brandy and water and smoking cigars; in which medicinal occupation he continued till the arms of Morpheus again received him, and he awoke not till the sun was fairly risen, when he informs us that he knelt down and thanked God that in his merciful Providence he was still alive.

This narrative made a curious impression on me at the

time. I conceived a morbid desire to visit such a deadly place as this old town of Chagres, and wondered if I would die there, should I ever do so. Senor Ramos' house became an object of interest to me, and a place to be seen, as the Coliseum, St. Paul's, or the Louvre. And that is why I now say that our camp was pitched not far from *there*.

But ask the untravelled reader, was Senor Ramos' house such a grand edifice, and was it air-tight? Certainly not; but at the time I did not know how writers, generally considered of the strictest veracity, will sometimes sift a little spice of fiction into their works, where there is a chance of producing an impression. Yet the Ramos mansion, even in my time, was the best house in Chagres. It was a frame building of one story and a half, with a piazza in front, a regular pitch pine floor, and a tight thatched roof projecting down over the piazza, making that quite a cool and inviting spot for a lounge in the day-time. And it might have been comparatively air-tight; and certainly, with its raised wooden floor, must have been a healthier place to sleep in than the wretched huts around.

One day, the Major came to me with quite a chuckling air, and showed me a small bag of specie which he had received of Senor Ramos, in exchange for some doubloons, which, notwithstanding all our unlucky adventures, he had still left among his stores.

"Seventeen dollars to the doubloon," said he, with the air of a successful financial operator.

"Let me see the dollars," said I.

"The real metal," said the Major, taking one out, and ringing it on the table.

"Oh, certainly," said I, "the real metal, only these happen to be New Granadian dollars, which are only worth some seventy or eighty cents each in the States, and your Spanish dou-

bloons are worth according to our last prices current, sixteen American dollars and forty cents."

The Major was extremely crest-fallen, particularly as I laughed quite heartily, which I did from thinking of Señor Ramos' "indemnifying his finances," like his Cruces contemporary, for the impertinent curiosity with which himself and his establishment were often visited.

Apart from Senor Ramos' air-tight house, Chagres proper is truly a wretched old town, and yet I think the American side the most execrable of the two. But the native side has existed for years in its present filthy, dilapidated condition. It is the *home*—Heaven forgive us for thus desecrating that holiest of words—of its inhabitants. Here were they born, and here they grow up; here, in fulness of time, they are supposed to have married, and become fathers and mothers; and when we look upon the place in this light, its mean kennel-like hovels, its putrid streets, its stagnant pools, its slimy pavements, its hairless dogs, its sick carrion-fed pigs, its sneaking lizards, characteristic crabs, its scorpions, centipedes, and tarantulas, all of the latter accepted as belonging to the category of domestic animals—I must confess that I find it hard to recognise these *natives* as members of the same great family as myself. That this place should be so low and vile and loathsome, when it is set in a frame of such magnificent verdure; that these people should eat *pork* and drink the most inflammatory of fire water, when the orange, the mango, and the banana are ripe and mellow, and rotting even on the trees, within a few rods of their thresholds! It is certainly no impious presumption on my part, to hope their heaven, whatever it is to be, may not be mine. And yet, there is no toad, however "ugly and venomous, but wears some precious jewel in its head." So these fellows have served, and are yet serving, a good

purpose in their way; and the dogged perseverance with which they have given the sons of Empire a shove on their careering path, is quite a redeeming trait in their bestial character.

The town, be it remarked, in passing, is not entirely destitute of civic character, as at first sight would appear to be the case. From a bird's-eye view of the huts, one would be a little puzzled to fix upon the precise locality of the Court House, City Hall, or Church, yet Chagres lays claim to a Judge, an Alcalde, and a Priest. And speaking of the priest, one day while we were at Chagres, a little adventure occurred, of which he was the hero. The incident is not very funny, but to those who have met the man, and view it in connexion with his ghostly functions, I have reason to hope that it may prove slightly laughable.

I will premise the narrative, by describing this dignitary as being personally of a sad and sallow cast.

"Long, and lean, and lank,
As is the ribbed sea sand!"

With eyes, of which the whites were emphatically "sicklied o'er," straight black hair like an Indian's, a solemn, woe-begone expression in general, everlastingly habited in black, but of a texture nowise akin to that which derives its name from its eternal durability—profound in his meditations, shallow in the crown of his sombrero; "stately in his courtesies, and scanty in his nether apparel." Such was the melancholy padre *in personâ*.

Well, then, it happened that one day we were at the identical bazaar, spoken of in a previous work, as the extensive property of "General Jackson," when the church dignitary under discussion entered. Never was a philan-

thropic question put to mortal man, with more aptitude, than that which the great general addressed to the priest, when his sombre shadow first fell across the threshold.

"Padre, will you smile?"

The padre's risible organs relaxed not, but he bowed his head profoundly, and stalked back of the counter, where I am inclined to believe that, if the term "smile" referred on that occasion to taking a drink of spirituous liquor, as I am told it sometimes does, the padre smiled long and frequently. At any rate, when he came forth again into the Gentile world, his eyes had a dancing gleam in them, quite different from anything which we had before remarked in that locality; and his body swayed to and fro, as he propelled, as if in sympathy with some internal mirthfulness.

Out walked the regenerated padre into the open sunshine—for there are times when there is sunshine at Chagres—as has been before remarked.

There was a schooner lying directly in front of the General's emporium, with a plank stretched from her rail to the shore. "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad," is an old proverb, and just as certain is it that when a man is "wrong," "sick," "shot in the neck," or whatever little misfortune of a like nature he may be afflicted with, these same gods invariably instil into his mind a wilful and unconquerable determination "to walk a plank." But not to wrong our padre, or scandalize his sacred office, it is but fair to remember that this propensity may proceed from other causes. We have it upon no less authority than that of Mr. Richard Swiveller, that the mere fact of a man's "having the sun in his eyes," may so confuse his perceptions, as to put him in quite a lamentable plight. Be that as it may, the priest saw the plank, and all the boatmen in Chagres would have been powerless to dissuade him from an attempt to walk it.

The General and his clerk were watching him from the door.

"Steady, Padre," said the General, as the padre first tried the plank to assure himself of its steadiness.

"Steady, old boy," said Fred.

"He'll never get aboard," said the General, for the padre appeared to have a dead beat of it.

"Perhaps he'll have a little more soap on his boots," suggested Fred.

But he seemed to have quite soap enough, for at the same moment the vessel gave a rather sudden lurch inward, which joggled the plank, and was the means of precipitating the ambitious dignitary into the muddy water of the river. The water was not above the padre's height in the spot where he fell, but yet he contrived somehow to get his head under two or three times; and each time that that sallow appendage emerged from the plunge, his straight Indian-like hair seemed to have acquired an extra tenacity, and stuck to his hollow forehead and cheek-bones like bark to a young tree.

The General was inwardly delighted and outwardly shocked, and toddled off some distance up the levee to get a boat, while Fred, who took the matter very coolly, as a thing which he was quite prepared for, picked up a boat-hook in the store, and proceeded to the bank to fish up the unfortunate priest. Before attending to his case, however, Fred attacked the floating beaver, which bringing safely to shore, he there elevated with his thumb and forefinger as if it were a foot-ball, and gave it a kick which sent it soaring to a distance of some fifty feet down the levee, where it was picked up by a party of stragglers, who made off with it—probably to carry out the joke. He then applied himself to the saturated padre, and having got a secure hold upon the seat of his trowsers, had no difficulty in bringing him to land.

But what a plight he was in! His shiny black suit seemed pasted to him like so much court plaster. To say that he was drenched, soaked, or saturated, would convey no correct idea of his thoroughly humid condition. Here was a damp, moist, watery sort of a padre. You might have wrung out of the stitching of one of his button-holes, more liquid than a contemplation of all the sins and miseries of the human race would ever have squeezed from under his eyelids.

Jackson, who now hove in sight, sculling a boat under the vessel's stern, seeing at a glance the state of things, suggested to Fred, with his customary forethought, that the padre should be taken into the shop and treated to something warming. Whereupon Fred drew one of the padre's arms within his own, and shouting "Come along, old gal," to the infinite amusement of those boys standing around, whose early days had been spent in the neighborhood of the Bowery, lifted his right leg once or twice to a right-angular position with his body, and brought it firmly back to the ground again, before really setting out, intending thereby to give a farcelike character to the whole transaction. So much devoted was Fred, nevertheless, to his employer's interest, and so anxious to carry out his orders in the most literal manner, that having got the unfortunate padre safe into the shop, he contrived to get two glasses of the General's worst brandy down his, the padre's, throat, before the proprietor of the establishment appeared.

"Now, then," said Jackson, puffing with his unusual exertion as he came in, "we'll see what we can do for this poor devil in the way of a little something to drink, eh, mio amigo."

"Con mucho gusto," said the padre, and he dispatched two generous glasses more.

"Now for a change of clothes," said the General.

"His toilette shall be attended to," said Fred. "Walk this way."

With much difficulty the padre was got up stairs, where Fred in a business-like manner proceeded to strip him, calling at the same time upon Jackson for such unclerical robes as his "striped shorts," and "bottle green cut away."

"But," said the General, suggestively, "your clothes will answer better."

"Nonsense," said Fred, "mine 'll fit him."

"True," said the General, "they may be considered open to that objection."

"Ain't these clothes rather large?" asked the padre, in bad Spanish, and a misgiving tone, as he cast his eye upon the baggy-looking cast-offs of Jackson.

"Large!" said Fred, "just wait till you're full-rigged—large—well done—pretty fair."

"But," said the padre, "they look so——"

"Wait till the pillows are in, and you'll see," said Fred.

Fred had by this time got the church dignitary into shirt, drawers, and stockings, and now proceeded to apply two pillows to his lank frame in order to make Jackson's garments stick, as he observed.

"Is this the way people wear their clothes in America?" inquired the padre.

"Of course it is," said Fred. "Now, then, my boy, raise your leg a little—so, now the other," and the ordinarily black-robed official was encased, so far as his nether extremities went, probably for the first time in his life, in a pair of striped trousers.

"Shall we furnish him with a waistcoat?" asked Fred.

"There is my old mouse-colored velveteen," observed Jackson, "if that would be appropriate for him."

"Oh, quite so," said Fred, and the mouse-colored velveteen was brought forth and donned.

"And now for the coat," said Fred.

The coat was likewise adapted without difficulty, and the priest stood before us, a very fat man in his paunch and rear, but with extraordinarily thin extremities. His head looked like that of a man who had lost his own and was trying on several, and having pitched upon one which did not accord at all with his general appearance, was keeping it on a moment just for the fun of the thing. His trowsers being too short in the legs and his coat as much too scanty in the sleeves, displayed to full view his meagre wrists and ankles, which, taken in connexion with his general wooden appearance, made one almost think him to be an image which had somehow been exposed in the night-time, and for whose dilapidated extremities the rats were answerable. The matter of the ankles, however, was remedied by Fred, who enticed the unwary padre into a pair of Jackson's high boots, leaving a portion of the striped trowsers inside of the same. Nothing was now wanting but a hat. Two were produced, or rather one hat, and one cap. The hat was of a dirt color, whether originally so or not I cannot say, of a low round top and broad brim, *à la California*. The cap was a thin one, of a light-colored cloth, and of the style denominated "skull." The hat was decided on as the most appropriate, and the padre's costume was complete.

I have been thus particular in describing the making up of this ghostly functionary on this occasion, because in a quiet, humorous way, it was equal to anything I had lately seen. The idea of this bundle of dry bones in the shape of an old Spanish padre being clothed in baggy striped trowsers and a bottle-green coat of the latest Newmarket cut with metal buttons; why the little incident of Mr. Sleek

of the "Serious Family" being invited out to have "a jolly good time," by Captain Maguire, was nothing to it.

But to shorten this lengthy narrative of a very trifling incident, I will just add, that the padre, not being accustomed to his new suit, fell in getting down stairs, and took an internal application of brandy and water for his bruises, after which he sallied forth to look up a boat to take him to the other side. Misfortune does not always command the deference which is its due. As the padre left the hospitable establishment of General Jackson, I am compelled to say, as a faithful delineator of facts, that quite a concourse of those boys, before alluded to, as having probably been educated near the Bowery, received him with shouts bordering on derision, accompanied with such observations as: "Halloa, old gal, you round again!" "I say, Friar Tuck, hold on a bit, I want to confess." "When is the next cock fight?" "Come on, old lady, take my arm," and many another of the same elevated tone.

"Speaking of blacklegs," said Tom to me that evening, as we were sitting together after a very promiscuous dinner, "you should have seen the old priest to-day when he came across. Such a figure!"

"How was he dressed, Tom?"

"Dressed! Well, he had on a trotting coat and wore his trowsers inside of his boots, a California hat—and let me see—yes, a money belt strapped round his waist, with a dinner knife stuck in behind." (This last item was an embellishment of Tom's.)

"Well, if the clothes fitted—"

"Oh, they were a capital fit; but somehow the priest was considerably swollen. I should think he had eaten a peck of dried apples for breakfast, and done nothing but drink all the morning. Then he was so solemn under it all."

"Well, Tom, what happened?"

"Why, just after he landed, he met a troop of his apostles going in sheets and lighted candles to do what the doctors had not quite finished with a sick Frenchman, a few doors above here. The priest wanted to beg off, but it was no use, go he must, and just as he stood; it was great to see him."

"And I suppose they finished the man at once?"

"No, they didn't: it appears that the Frenchman, seeing the priest on such a regular time, came to the conclusion that there was something worth living for, after all, and has been getting better ever since."

"Now, Tom, what should you say if I should tell you that water—nothing but water—was the cause of that strange metamorphosis in the priest's costume?"

"Well," answered Tom, thoughtfully, "I suppose that I should have to believe you, but I would much rather that you wouldn't test my powers of credulity exactly in that way."

CHAPTER XI.

DEVELOPMENTS.

THERE was nothing particular to detain us at Chagres ; and so on the morning after our return from our bootless tramp in the woods (it was literally such to poor Allen), Tom and I crossed the river to arrange for barges to take the camels and ourselves to Gorgona. It was a fortunate circumstance for us that no steamers were in at the time and none expected for some days, and we were on that account enabled to obtain conveyance at a comparatively reasonable rate. Still the expense was enormous. But the gentleman with whom we engaged was a dashing sort of speculator, and made the payment of our freight so very accommodating that we felt ourselves particularly lucky again in falling in with him. Poor fellow, he is since dead, and his partner likewise. He had buffeted the rude world long and bravely in many another wild spot, and had come to Chagres for his death wound. I fancy it was a certain rough chivalric idea of being the topmost hero somewhere, that had brought him hither. But however that may be, he did us a good turn, and he will sleep none the less lightly in his grave for that.

We engaged six barges for our camels and one for ourselves and luggage, and completed our arrangements for taking a fresh start early next morning, by which means, the

proprietor of the barges informed us, we would reach Dos Hermanos by night-fall.

Tom and I then went round to the Empire City Hotel, to inquire after our old friends. We had been away from the American Chagres only two days; but two days in Chagres are equal to—what shall I say?—often to years in other places, so suddenly are great changes there wrought; and these two days of our absence had been by no means deficient in incident.

Whom should we behold on turning the corner but the veritable Quanto Valley himself, seated upon the piazza of the hotel, with his hat off, his chair slightly tilted backward, his legs reposing upon a second chair, and himself employed mechanically in picking his teeth, while he evidently revolved something in his mind to his entire satisfaction.

"Mr. Vale," said I, grasping his hand cordially, "how are things, my dear fellow?"

"Ah!" exclaimed he, on recognising us; "so you are back already. Well, I am not the man to make a person feel unpleasantly by alluding to any little failure he may happen to have made, by an error in his calculations, although you will recollect that I—"

"Oh, perfectly," said I, smiling; "but where is Parkins?"

"Ah, true, Parkins—well, Parkins is sick, and there's no knowing where he'd ha' been by this time, if it hadn't ha' been for me."

"Hovering about his couch like a ministering angel," observed Tom, poetically.

"And where is Parkins now?" inquired I; for it did not seem to agree with the fitness of things that Vale should be enjoying such excessive complacency, while Parkins might be writhing with pain—perhaps dying alone, in agony of soul.

"Well, just now," replied Vale, "Parkins is up stairs in the room occupied by young Vitti before the blow-up here."

"What blow up?"

"Why, the great affair of the day—the elopement—the murder. Why, I tell you what; there's the material here for a whole fashionable romance, in six volumes. I have half a mind to write it out myself. What do publishers—"

"Nonsense, man; what are you talking of? Have Angelo Vitti and his sister actually left this house?"

"Of course they have."

"And who is the present landlord?"

"I am."

"Now, come, Vale, my good fellow; I am greatly interested in this matter. Sit down here, and tell me all about it. Vitti has gone, eh?"

"Yes, Vitti has gone. But, to begin at the beginning, the same day that you left, Vitti's sister—that young girl, you recollect, that nursed the *Parlevous* Count, after he was fished out of the water by Vitti—well, she was missing. She was away from the house the whole day. Vitti was dreadfully troubled about it; for she wasn't used to be off by herself, and never without his knowledge. Nobody could explain anything about it. That same night, after dark, *Parlevous*, he gets a canoe, takes his saddle-bags with him, and off *he* goes to join her at some rendezvous agreed upon."

"Stop; how do you know that?"

"Why, they didn't go together."

"But how do you know that there was an understanding between them as to eloping in this way?"

"I guess there's no other way of accounting for it."

"Go on."

"Yesterday morning, when Vitti found this out, he lashed round in great style. I thought he was crazy. Nothing

would do but he must have a boat, and go in pursuit; and he swore a terrible oath, that if any wrong had been done to his sister by old *Parlevous*, he'd have his heart's blood, if he swung for it; which he wouldn't be likely to do down here. Hark! there's Parkins up."

"Never mind Parkins; go on with your story."

"But I was to have bled Parkins when he woke."

"Let his blood alone, and take care that *you* don't commit murder. Go on with your story, sir."

"Let's see. I was telling you that Vitti was off after them. It seems that he overtook them at Dos Hermanas—that is, he didn't find his sister, but he found *Parlevous*, and was so enraged to think that his sister had been made away with, that he murdered him on the spot. That was last evening. A boat left soon after, and arrived here this morning with the news."

"A very likely story, Mr. Vale!"

"You don't believe it, then?"

"Precious little of it."

"But you believe that the Count is dead?"

"Yes."

"And that Vitti killed him?"

"No."

"Well, you believe that Carlotta Vitti has run away?"

"Yes."

"And that she eloped with the Count?"

"No."

"Well, I have told you all I know about it. Now, I must go and doctor Parkins."

"Stop a moment. Where is your friend, the snake man?"

"Devil knows, perhaps—I don't."

"Go ahead; I'll be with you in a moment."

Here was a pretty batch of developments, strung together

at rather short notice. Something of all this I had expected, but certainly not to this extent. Why, it was like the atmospheric freaks at Chagrea. At one moment, the softest, balmiest sunshine; and the next, a black, cloud-walled arch, and the most terrible lightning and thunder. I breathed short under the influence of it; I knew not what to think. As for action, I was powerless to move. That there was some great mistake somewhere, I was perfectly satisfied; but what was it? How could it be brought to light and cleared up?

While my mind was staggering under this load of doubt and mystery, and I was fairly working myself into a fever, in attempting to get at some satisfactory interpretation, I heard the voice of Vale, calling upon us to come up stairs. We immediately obeyed, and there was Parkins in a long nightshirt, shivering and sallow, sitting upon the sofa, with his feet in a bucket of water. It was evident that his feeble show of opposition to his old partner had all faded out, under the influence of the fever, and he regarded Vale with the querulous respect which a sick child evinces towards its nurse.

"What is this, Parkins?" said I cheerily, by way of raising his spirits; "a little under the weather, eh?"

"Sick," said Parkins, in a feeble, melancholy tone, "very sick."

"And what is this operation of soaking the feet for, Vale?"

"That's to relieve his head," answered Vale; "I gave him physic yesterday to relieve his bowels, and am going to bleed him directly to relieve his system generally."

"And you're in a fair way to relieve him of his system altogether, Vale."

"I think I know something about doctoring," replied Vale,

indignantly ; " didn't I have fourteen men with me on board of the steamer from New York—men that I was taking to California on shares, and paying their passage through—and didn't I preserve them all in an excellent state of health by doctoring."

" Yes," said Parkins, with a faint smile, for even in his great debility he could not resist the opportunity to make a point against Vale ; " you doctored them rather too much for your own interest. You see,"—continued Parkins, turning towards Tom and myself, " Vale used to give these men bit-
ters three times a day, an hour before each meal, and being steerage passengers, they could not get enough at table to satisfy their appetites after this extra sharpening, and so made an agreement for additional board with the cook, at the rate of four dollars per week, which of course Vale had to pay ?"

" And what has become of those fourteen men ?" inquired Tom.

" Vamosed," said Vale laconically, to whom the subject was an unpleasant one.

" Now, see here, Vale," said I, to bring the subject back to the starting point, " the course you are pursuing with Parkins will certainly result in his death. Just for once allow me to know more than you can be expected to. This man has got chills and fever, his liver is torpid, and requires some active medicine to rouse it to a healthy state, after which a few doses of quinine will effectually break up his fever, and if he behaves himself in future, he may go on his way rejoicing. But I do not undertake to prescribe. My friend Dr. G——, who is very successful in his treatment of these cases, will soon put him all right ; whereas if you persist in your treatment, you will kill him."

" Very well," said Vale, who indeed was easily persuaded into anything, " you may call your friend the doctor. As

landlord of this hotel, I have about as much as I can attend to, any how."

Parkins brightened up amazingly, as much from seeing his old partner and adversary put down, as from a prospect of getting actual relief in a legitimate way. Shortly after I met Doctor G——, and first receiving from him a confirmation of Vale's developments, I dispatched him to the rescue of Parkins, which I am happy to be able to say, he accomplished in a few days.

During the remainder of that day and evening, I staggered about like a man who, having eyes, saw not. I was completely bewildered by the news which I had heard. If this Marquis de G—— was murdered, and there were reasonable grounds for suspecting Vitti, I was not so sure of his not swinging for it, as Vale seemed to be. At Chagres people act mostly from personal feeling or impulse, upon which there is no counting with any certainty as to results. But that frail and delicate girl, one half of whose thoughts and affections were in Heaven, and the other half occupied with the holiest duties of earth, who was not, I was sure, a guilty party in this strange affair—what had become, or what would under any supposable circumstances become of her?

CHAPTER XII.

CHAGRES RIVER.

A BRIGHT, sunshiny morning; fresh, dewy, breezy, but especially sunshiny. The ripples of the lazy old river were bright and merry in the warm, clear beams of the morning sun; the banks of the river, in their evergreen garb, were laughing through the tears of last night's dew, and thrusting forward bouquets of the most gorgeous flowers, some of them golden-hued as the sun himself—their tribute to his loving majesty. The early birds were all cawing, chirruping, and twittering, for his first beams had penetrated their little hearts, and made them beat thus audibly for joy—and certainly there was sunshine in our hearts too, as we floated so luxuriously along, with the bending river beckoning us forward by new beauties at every turn; and the cool sea-breeze chasing us astern, while the tide, setting inward, did all the work of our journey, and we had a pleasant suspicion that the dipping oars was a mere accompaniment thereunto. Sunshine in our hearts, I say, for I am sure it was reflected plainly enough outwardly upon our faces, as we sailed so blithe and merrily up the Chagres river.

Morning on the river! It was as fresh and vivid in its coloring, as if that very morning was the first since the world rose up purified from the deluge. Its breath was as pure and sweet as if the forgiving angel had but just then breathed over it, while he pronounced its future everlasting

exemption from the external visitings of its Creator's wrath. There is no land—only trees, and creeping vines, and long waving streamers, and strangely twisted boughs, that seem to have root nowhere, but in a grotesquely sportive mood, to have flung themselves into the heaps of verdure, and there lain saucily ever afterwards; and such great hanging bunches of the mistletoe and moss, with red and yellow leaves of flowers, asking only such a little place to look up from towards the sun. And overhead there is no sky, but a deep sea of ever-deepening azure, where the lordly sun himself, without whose presence this world of beauty would not care to put on its richest charms, is floating serenely upward. And we feel our divinity stirring within us, for at our will we move onward, and leave behind us this other form of God, which has no will or power to follow. Truly, if in crowded cities man feels so bitterly his miserable insignificance, here in the plenitude of nature's realms, where his heart beats full and responsive to every breath of her exquisite harmony, and his eye gives beauty to her every feature, and yet his will is there to say how long this dalliance shall last; here he feels that there is nothing wanting but a child-like obedience and faith, to become so very great—almost a part of God, and accept the earth, even as it was meant to be his to beautify, and love, and bless.

The picture of that morning on the river is painted in unfading colors, and framed and hung away in one of the chambers of my memory, and I shall never look upon it but with pleasant associations. Hour after hour rolled languidly, but not heavily away, and still we floated onward. The first flush of excitement passed off, and we saw things in a clearer point of view. There we were, creeping along, our seven barges close up under the left bank of the river, sometimes even shooting in beneath the over-reaching branches

of great trees, and sailing for a rod or two, as it were, in the shadow of a rustic arbor, and a moment afterwards obliged to sheer out towards the middle of the stream, to avoid some decayed and fallen trunk. There was a presentiment in our minds, too, as of another boat skirmishing on our right flank, now dashing by us at an alarming rate, and now drifting like a log, and allowing us to come up with it—a huge canoe manned by natives, and freighted as it seemed to us with our old comrades—Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, Monsieur Crapolet, and Thom (for it seemed that Mr. Arthur Orrington was somehow not amongst them). Between this boat and ours there was quite a frequency of communication. Articles of trifling value, such as eggs, oranges, and the like, were occasionally thrown to and fro; but the great feature in this friendly intercourse seemed to be the passing of a bottle, attached to the end of a stick, which idea I think originated with the other boat, and which, however inconvenient it at first appeared, was attended with very cheerful results. There was, likewise, a suspicion in our minds that one of the native boatmen, in the other boat, who had, in the excitement of the moment, so far forgot himself as to take off his shirt, was uttering something every now and then, which he meant for music. It would have been very dreadful at any other time, but we were all so pleasantly disposed that we merely stopped our ears and laughed, and tried to think of something else. After the gymnastic exercise of the bottle had been gone through with to considerable extent, the Colonel in the other boat made himself rather disagreeable, by shouting at intervals, each time in a different tone of voice, “Go it, ye camels!” evidently confounding that expression in his mind with the popular phrase of “go it, ye cripples.”

Noon came. It was hard now to avoid the sun's search-

ing glances, though we crept ever so close under the river's bank. Alligators were now and then seen stretched sleepily out to bask in his beams; and once we saw a cold, slimy-looking serpent come up out of the water and go winding and twisting in among the mangrove bushes of the shore. Ugh! how loathsome and snaky did he look. We began to be tired of sitting so long in our boat, although there was often a breeze which, sweeping over the river, and whistling in beneath our awning, caused a delicious coolness. About the middle of the forenoon we had passed a bit of a clearing where were a few native ranches, and a row of cocoa-nut trees on the river's margin; but we did not go on shore there, although the occupants of the other boat did, and Colonel Allen was a shade more boisterous afterwards. The conduct of Monsieur Crapolet during that morning reminded me of Major Monsoon in *Charles O'Malley*, and "what between a little sleep and a little something to drink," I have no doubt that the time passed very pleasantly with him.

All of a sudden we found ourselves at Gatun, a filthy, insignificant little hamlet of some half a hundred huts. Here we disembarked, and having picked our way up the bank, and selected a vacant lot, Monsieur Crapolet and Thom set to work installing the cooking-stove and its never-failing accompaniment, the black curtain.

"Gatun," said Colonel Allen, whom we found planted in about the centre of the place with his hands in his pockets, repeating to himself, as if reading from a geographical school-book; "a small village situated on the banks of Chagres river, famous for the healthy state of the vegetation by which it is surrounded."

And the Colonel had got its measure pretty correctly. I am not aware that there is any particular department of industry in which its inhabitants excel, except that of smok-

ing. All who were not cooking or eating, were smoking during our stay, at all events ; but it may be that they never work laboriously during the heat of the day. The interior of their huts was very similar to those of Chagres, a box or two less, perhaps, in proportion to the number of persons to sit down, a greater quantity of jerked beef strung along under the eaves, some bunches of corn, a hammock, a couple of dry hides, a shelf containing bottles and small glasses, an iron kettle on the ground floor, a notched pole for a staircase to the attic chambers, a boat paddle or two, several piccaninnies of both sexes in a state of blissful nudity, from one to half-a-dozen women in white cotton dresses, profusely adorned with ruffles and flounces, and a full-grown member of the male sex, the extreme scantiness of whose attire reminded one of the costume of a Georgia Major—"a shirt collar and a pair of spurs."

There was a sprinkling of domestic animals about the settlement : a few cows, several raw-looking pigs, and an endless quantity of hairless dogs, for, as Tom maliciously observed, no Connecticut provision dealer had as yet thought it worth his while to establish a factory at that place. There was an American hotel at Gatun, in the outskirts of the town, above us on the river, which hotel was a piece of tarred canvas set up on poles. There was a tree in front, and the unfortunate proprietor had caused a large lantern to be rigged thereunto, which he was in the habit of illuminating at night, as a kind of *ignis fatuus* for unwary travellers. About ten people could stand in the shade of this tent when the sun was not directly overhead ; but during a heavy rain, I think not more than half that number could find protection. This was the only house of consequence in the place.

We had quite a laugh at a little incident which occurred as we were on our way back to dinner, in which Colonel

Allen was one of the performers. A particularly stupid-looking native, who was sitting at the door of a ranche, and had been for some time regarding us all in a sleepy sort of way, at length rose and made his way towards Allen, as if he had been revolving some enterprise in his mind, and had finally pitched upon his man. By a variety of energetic signs, he gave Allen to understand that he wished to see him at his house. We all accompanied the Colonel, prepared to stand by him to the last. The native entered first, and going to a corner of the room, produced an umbrella, a very shaky and shabby affair, which he exhibited to the Colonel, making signs for him to open it, and repeating eagerly "no quiera comprar? no quiera comprar?" "The subscriber" was quite dumb-founded. Even the native saw in him the unmistakable signs of a dilapidated gentleman. That particular umbrella alone was wanting to complete the picture.

Afternoon, and again upon the river. Hour after hour, floating amid the same wealth of vegetation, but in how many thousand different forms. And the sun—what a frisky sun he was during that afternoon—now right ahead, settling gradually down behind a high mountain, now on our right hand, again on our left, and pretty soon looking straight at our boat's stern, from above a broad range of forest directly in our wake. We had a small shower of rain towards sundown, and the refreshed air with which every leaf, and shrub, and tree within sight, lifted up its head, and stood erect afterwards, made me think of a great caravan or a vast army in the desert, worn, and dusty, and ready to faint, coming suddenly to quench their thirst at an oasis. There was the same marked appearance of relief and elasticity in every minutest part as in the general whole.

And at length twilight came, and we were still upon the

river. The sun was already gone down, and the river and its banks wore a darkened melancholy aspect. We rolled up our awning, and watched from afar the coming of the starry evening. The air was getting heavy with the night dew, and it was quite cosy and comfortable to draw out our greatcoats and shawls for protection from it. A different species of birds from those we saw in the morning, were now heard warbling among the bushes; but when one flew across the stream, we could only see its graceful winged form, but nothing of its variegated plumes. And as the darkness deepened, the lesser lights of heaven began to twinkle over-head, and the broad river looked black except where at times there was a silvery ripple on its bosom, and the sea of foliage on either side was a dark rolling mass. Often it looked as if we were approaching the termination of the stream, for the banks ahead seemed to meet, as if it were an inland lake on which we sailed, until we reached the next sharp bend, when lo! a long stretch of dark silent water, terminating as before in a sombre and apparently impassable wall.

It was real comfort to see the Major during that day's sail. One could not help feeling some effects of the enthusiasm which momentarily broke away from him, enveloping him as in a magnetic sphere. He knew every winged form that presented itself to our view, though many of them he doubtless saw for the first time. And while he revelled in intense appreciation of each and all of those glorious expressions of mother nature, his little wife, with her inspired pencil, fastened them, all aglow as they were with verdant and rosy life, upon the pages, to which, "in after years, if solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief, should be *his* portion," he might turn for sweetest consolation.

A splash in the water alongside of the other boat, and

almost instantaneously afterwards a much heavier splash, and the huge black canoe has ceased its progress, allowing us to come alongside.

"What's broke?" inquired Tom.

"This miserable sinner of a Frenchman," replied Colonel Allen, in a thick tone of voice, suggestive of "railroad-pudding" or "steerage-fare," "by his awkward manner of assuaging the pangs of thirst, has knocked one of the subscriber's pistols into the river."

"The subscriber," be it here remarked, had been somewhat more quiet vocally, since leaving Gatin, but had acquired instead a very unpleasant as well as dangerous habit of discharging his pistols about every other minute. It appeared that the second plunge was taken by one of the native boatmen diving after the lost weapon, which he presently reappeared with, and we continued our journey.

About an hour afterwards, on turning a bend in the river, we saw looming through the darkness on our left hand, another of those great delusive lanterns, which intimated that another American hotel was somewhere in the vicinity. This place, which contained likewise several native ranches, and had quite steep and slippery banks, was Dos Hermanas, distant from Chagres about twenty miles.

The other boat was in before us. When we had landed, I noticed that Colonel Allen and Monsieur Crapolet remained on board of their craft, and that the latter gentleman was stretched at full length upon the baggage, apparently taking a little repose, while the former leaned upon his arm, and in a confused kind of way appeared to be looking about in quest of adventures.

"Asleep?" said I, pointing to Monsieur Crapolet. "No," replied Colonel Allen, "knocked down by a squall; the subscriber, ditto—can you lend the aforesaid half a dollar?"

Alas! &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOS HERMANAS.

CHAGRES fever is the meanest of all diseases. At least so said Tom, on the evening of our arrival at Dos Hermanas, and as he was, at the time, fairly in its clutches, his observation on the subject ought certainly to be entitled to credit. No sooner were we arrived under the canvas of the American Hotel, and seated on the empty candle and claret boxes which served in lieu of chairs at that establishment, than the premonitory chill began. At the same time a perfect torrent of water descended, beating furiously upon our roof, as if the Isthmus, and especially that part of it known as Dos Hermanas, had somehow been overlooked in the post-diluvian promise that the world should be destroyed by flood no more.

We were as yet supperless. Storm and darkness were reigning out of doors, that is figuratively out of doors, but really all around us, for the four tallow candles which stood upon the board at the bar, and the other board where a repast was to be served for us, gave out just glimmer enough to enlighten us vaguely as to our miserable position. All of us were tired, chilled and wet; separated from our boats by a blind, slippery path, and one of us with the Chagres fever. A truly delightful situation! Who wouldn't be weary of the monotonies of home when such piquant adventures can be had at almost any time of year, after only ten days' steaming from New York!

But as I was saying Chagres fever is the meanest of diseases. It has a sly, snaky way of making its approaches, and falls upon one at last like a serpent, enveloping and crushing him in its cold, sweaty folds. It makes a man feel pitifully mean, crouching under his blankets, and drawing towards the fire like an antiquated hulk, or to use another phrase of Tom's, "like a sick kitten to a hot brick." It is in one respect like sea-sickness or ghosts, no one believes in it till it touches him with its chilly finger. It lays its hand upon him, and how far off and unattainable seem the prizes of life, the pomp and honors of the world! He feels as if he had been guilty of turpitude to allow himself to be caught thus, and forced to be a sluggard, while others are so bravely at work all around. He is like a wounded man on the field of battle, turned over to the care of old women, while his gallant comrades press on and bear away the palm.

Tom's case, however, was a very light one, and it is due to him to say that he bore the affliction like a philosopher. We wrapped him well in blankets, and placed him upon the second cot of a tier which were planted in the rear of the bar, in order that the first might get the primary advantage of the drops of rain which trickled through the roof. He observed pleasantly, as we left him for a moment to take some refreshment, that when his tea was ready he would have it hot and without milk. This idea of Tom's was not original. He obtained it from a work entitled "A Guide across the Isthmus of Panama," wherein, among other things, the author perpetrates a cruel joke in advising all emigrants to California to abstain from milk while crossing the Isthmus. I wonder that this imaginative writer did not likewise caution them against too free an indulgence in porter-house steaks or nightingales' tongues.

The reader will be pleased to imagine us at table in the

dining-hall of this American Hotel. The board has been removed down towards the lee side, and the rain which beats in through and under the canvas to windward, is only disagreeable to us from the fact that it has caused a large puddle of water to locate in the immediate neighborhood of our feet. But what care we for the howling storm without, while seated at the festive board, spread with all the luxuries and delicacies of the season, ham, beans, salt mackerel, certain messes suggestive of a previous repast, resembling in the fragmentary parts of which they are made up what sailors term "lobscouse" and "dundy funk," and for vegetables and bread, what the same roving and rough-spoken class call, "hard tack!" In the way of drink, a very bitter and black kind of coffee, and a scurvy mixture which I think the middle-aged gentleman who waited upon us said was tea, although the question had not been asked by any one. The appearance of the cloth made one think that parties who had been used to the plains and did not understand the relative position of the plates, and knives, and forks, to the food before them, had been along that way, and kept up their old bivouacking habits. But I do not recollect that we saw anything worthy of remark in all this, and I don't think we should, if in lieu of half a score of pigs which navigated quite freely among the shoals of our legs, there had been the same quantity of tapirs. The truth of the matter is, that our moist and steaming condition was highly favorable to the generation of appetite, and without any unseasonable display of fastidiousness we drew up our candle-boxes and fell to, men, women, and children. I remember now that one of the ladies, on elevating a dish towards her olfactories, was rebuked by the middle-aged gentleman in attendance, who observed that they did not keep a Graham Hotel, and the victuals were placed there to be eaten and not smelt of. I

cannot now say as to whether this remark was made crustily or humorously.

When we had finished eating, it seems as if I ought to say when we had been sufficiently fed, we began gradually to realize that it had cleared off; we drew out towards an opening in the canvas, and lo! a picture of serenest, freshest beauty met our view; those primeval forests on the further bank, rising up from their bath in the clear moonshine, and the river, not dark and sombre now, but circling and winding in among the nooks and bends, like a silvery band of vapor, such as one often sees near the base of mountains in the early dawn; while around us at Dos Hermanas, the cleared bluff with its rounded embankments, and its venerable mango and cocoa-nut trees, scattered in little groups upon its surface, was just one of those charming spots where old Kit North would have delighted to come and lie down in at the gloaming; and above us, what troops of stars were clustered at their posts, while the rising moon came slowly up, filling the whole heavens with their glistening presence, save where here and there "a sable cloud" was seen to "turn forth its silver lining on the night;" the very air partook of the genial spirit of the scene, and was odorous with the tribute of flowers and blossoms far beyond our ken. It was a scene to arouse none but good and tranquillizing emotions, and yet here, as we had been told, with these very surroundings, only two evenings previous, revenge had wrought out its hellish purpose in the murder of a brother.

We were shown the place where the deed was done—a native hut, a few rods from our hotel. We were further informed by our middle-aged gentleman that the murderer had been taken there, sitting beside the corpse and asking frantically of the lifeless clay for his sister, who was supposed to have left Chagres in company with him who was now no more;

that he had gone off passively—with the party who arrested him, and neither avowed nor denied the act. We inquired if the French gentleman who had been murdered had anything of much value about his person, but our informant was not able to enlighten us upon that subject. He had no doubt of Vitti's guilt—not a bit of it, there was no one else about except a friend of the deceased, who had been the means of arresting Vitti, and had accompanied him back to Chagres. So much for the report of our middle-aged gentleman, who, like most of our acquaintances of that period, is now himself defunct.

I might go on to describe our visit to the Frenchman's rude grave, where he lay, poor fellow, far enough away from his ancestral halls; but, to confess the truth, I am a little ashamed of my murder scene; and were it not that, as a faithful delineator of facts, I have felt myself bound to introduce it, should have cautiously avoided it altogether. It may be, even now, that some hypercritical reader may credit the writer's fancy with this portion of his narrative; for, since the moment when the English Opium Ester classed murder as among the Fine Arts, it is unfortunately associated in the minds of many with something like romance.

And now that I am upon this subject, I will further say, what I omitted in its proper place, that on that same morning when our barges were rowing out from the muddy stream that flows by Chagres, on its southern boundary, we observed a crowd of people collected about the house of the Consul on the American side, and learnt, upon inquiry, that Vitti was there in custody, having been brought down the river on the evening previous. I felt the mean sensation of a man deserting a friend in need, when I suffered our barge to proceed up the stream without a word of protest. Perhaps to my intense desire to help him, I had no idea how; and to

unravel something of this horrible mystery, for my own satisfaction, may be attributed, in part at least, the expedition which I shortly afterwards undertook. And now to my narrative again.

Tom was progressing beautifully with his affair; the chill was off, and he was in a charming state of fever. The Major and I held a consultation together, and we came to the conclusion to treat him allopathically with calomel and quinine; although the Major, when the proper leisure and appliances were at hand, was most decidedly hydropathic.

“There is one difficulty in the way,” said I—“we have no medicine.”

“Perhaps the proprietor has some,” suggested the Major.

No; he denied the charge emphatically; although I have no doubt that he had a large quantity, but had no idea of allowing the fact to become public. I was sure that the other boat had none without asking, as its passengers kept themselves in a wholesome state of preservation by quite another method.

While we were talking on this subject, and Tom was making believe that he was somewhere in a city where it was a real pleasure to be ill, by asking one of us occasionally to look out of the window, and tell him what was going on in the street, and if the grocery store opposite and the apothecary's on the corner were yet open, or to read him something funny from the evening paper, a man came into the hotel, who said he was an express-man, and had arrived at Chagres at about two P. M. in the steamship *Falcon*. He also informed the proprietor that the *Falcon* was to leave, on her return, the next morning, at eight o'clock.

At this piece of information, the Major suddenly rose up, and took me earnestly aside. “See here,” said he, “it is a fine night. Would it not be worth while for some of us to

return to Chagres, and provide ourselves with a stock of medicine? We can lie over here till to-morrow afternoon, if required. This appears to be a ticklish climate, and there is no calculating upon the health of any one. This, however, is not the principal thing which I have to propose. Our women folks, as you know, have already exceeded their license in getting thus far on the Isthmus, the understanding having been, all along, that they were to return home from Chagres. Now, from what we have already seen, I am satisfied that this is no country for women and children to enjoy themselves particularly in; and if taken sick here, the attentions which they will require will cramp our movements, if no more serious results follow. I would therefore propose that they go down to Chagres with one of us to-night, and take passage on the Falcon, which, we learn, leaves early in the morning. They will, no doubt, object quite resolutely; but it is their good as well as ours which demands it, as it seems to me."

What one feels most strongly is not always most easily described. I shall therefore pass over the discussion which ensued upon this sudden but prudent proposition of the Major's. There was considerable skirmishing in words half playful, half earnest—perhaps, too, some tears; but it was finally settled. Our wills were forced to consent to what circumstances made necessary, and the dear companions of our previous toils and pleasures were to leave us. I was appointed to accompany them, and see them safely embarked on board the steamer, while the Major remained to take care of Tom.

The little business transaction which we soon afterwards had with the characters of the other boat was by no means a difficult one. We were to have the native canoe for our return to Chagres, and they were to come into our barge for

the remainder of the water route. We accordingly made the necessary transfer of baggage, under which head Monsieur Crapolet was classed for the time being; the natives not only consenting to the exchange, but, having received half their charter money in advance, and knowing that one steamer was just arrived at Chagres, and another momentarily due, for once in their lives rose superior to the "poco tiempo" doctrine, and became quite efficient men.

I was a little amused at a characteristic remark of Allen's, as he settled himself into the stern sheets of our barge. "Well," said he, half sighing, with the air of an extremely foggy philosopher, "variety is charming. When the subscriber is at home, he always takes brandy and water in the morning, with a bit of lemon and sugar in it, brandy punch in the afternoon, and *hot* brandy punch in the evening."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT ON THE RIVER.

WHAT with "more last words," and good-byes, and God's blessings called down in showers upon us all by turns, and shifting of baggage, and sundry lookings round to see that everything was right and nothing forgotten, it was near midnight when we were quite ready. We had hardly got adrift, when one of those pleasant little showers, so suggestive of violets and columbines in our spring-time at home, came pattering upon our boat and baggage, with a small sample upon our own persons, for *we* were but partially protected by an awning of palm leaves—and on the still, swift-running river alongside. It was impossible to say where it came from, for there was not a cloud in the star-studded sky, if we except, indeed, a sort of fleecy gauze-like shadow of the same which went drifting slowly by us overhead, just such an apology as one often sees during a long drought, when all signs fail. Nevertheless, there was the positive fact—rain; and as we did not see the necessity of getting wet, though it was done ever so mysteriously, we drew in alongside of a small steamer which was puffing and blowing at the river's bank, as if it had just arrived, and had had a hard time of it.

There was about the usual assortment of gold-seekers on her quarter-deck, keeping guard over an immensity of what the western people call "plunder," which was made up in this case of every variety of trunk, chest, bag, and box, with

not a few greasy-looking brown paper parcels, suggestive of lunch. Contrary to the regulations of most steamers, "smoking abaft the engine" was permitted on board of this boat, and the atmosphere was quite hazy in consequence. There were some muffled people in shawls and bonnets, dimly seen amidst the clearings of the smoke, whom we should have taken for women, had not their nether extremities been encased in trowsers.

There was a group of Missourians, from Pike County, gathered about the gangway, as we boarded, one of whom was telling a story; and a dapper little chap, with a profuse gold watch-guard and very shiny hair, who might have been a runner for somebody or something, appeared to take great interest in what he said.

"Now," said the Missourian, "there was old Pillcott, and he was another customer."

"Warn't he, though?" said the dapper little chap, pretending to know all about it; "Billy Pillcott."

"No; Jim," said the Missourian.

"Aye, true," said the dapper little chap, "Jim Pillcott."

Most of these people seemed to be well acquainted, and called each other by nicknames; some by the name of the county they hailed from, prefixing the epithet "old" thereunto, such as Old Pike, Old Clay, and so on; others got their title from some peculiarity of dress, and were vociferously appealed to as "Bob-tail," "Yaller-breeches," or "Steeple-crown." One poor fellow was quite unfortunate in his sobriquet. He was a cadaverous-faced man, and sat a little apart from the crowd, occupied in spreading the chest before him with bread, cheese, and ham. When he had laid out about a supply for three, he deliberately rolled up his sleeves, brushed back his long loose hair, as if he were buttoning back his ears, and prepared to fall to. This man was styled

by the crowd "Potatoe Parings," and during his repast was frequently called upon "to throw himself away." "You should have seen him on board the steamer coming down," said one of his admirers to me; "Lord, how he would eat; it was like loading a gun. When he came to be sea-sick and throw up, we thought he would bust, and it was a wonder that he didn't, for he was charged to the muzzle."

In the sternmost extremity of the deck was another group, one of whom was explaining that he had just been robbed of two hundred dollars in gold, and showed how it had been cut out of his pocket; and an excitement immediately sprang up amongst his auditors for arresting somebody and charging them with the act; and as nobody was at hand, suitable for the purpose, but a poor deaf and dumb fellow, who went by the appellation of Dummy, he was accordingly seized upon, and would have been searched, notwithstanding his piteous signs and cries, had not Judge Smithers, who was on a stroll about the premises, followed by Colonel Allen, come suddenly on board, and peremptorily put a stop to it, while the pugnaciously-disposed Colonel squared off in the background, and observed that "Providence had not prevented the subscriber from dying of cholera two years previous, that he might see a poor devil bamboozled in that style with impunity."

Some were card-playing, some betting heavily on a sweat cloth, some indulging in an Ethiopian melody, one man cutting out portraits in paper at a dollar a-piece, another deep in the columns of the last *Herald*, and two or three eccentric individuals vainly endeavoring to compose themselves to sleep. It was a curious picture of life in the rough, just what some of the old Dutch painters would have delighted to depict. The silence of the night, save for the pattering rain drops; the lonesomeness of the place, which would have

awed to silence a smaller or less excitable party ; the grotesque strangeness of this chance meeting of so many different characters, yet bound together by a secret chord of purpose and sympathy ; the pale light of the moon, which, notwithstanding the rain, lay in broad squares here and there upon the deck, and was the only light by which the characters of the piece were seen, all helped to give effect to the striking picture.

As soon as the rain was over we were again adrift, floating midway down the swift running current of the stream. Its surface was by no means as smooth and tranquil as when we ascended, for the heavy rains of the night had made it swollen and rough, and in places where some tributary mountain torrent came pouring headlong in, was quite dangerous in its eddies. Nevertheless we floated rapidly along, keeping near the middle of the stream, where we had none of the counter current, and were not exposed to contact with boats coming up the river. The clumps of thick growing trees, and bushes on the banks, wore altogether a new and peculiar aspect. They took grand forms of wonderful architecture—houses, castles, and broad-fronted palaces, where the windows were the openings in their boughs, through which the moonlight shone. At times there was a long line of steep but level embankment, which looked like the grim walls of a fort ; and then came the houses, castles, and palaces again. We discussed the beauties and merits of each new style as it was revealed to us, and afterwards wondered among ourselves as to the dwellers in these strange dark habitations. We wondered, if in the silvery light which pervaded those apartments and shone through the windows, families were assembled in quiet comfort after the rude day's toil ; if there was music and literature in those unseen circles ; if little children sat on their father's knee

whiling away his thoughts from the hard world ; if the light and the fireside blaze—for it was chilly enough on the river to make us think of that also—which had no ruddy glare in them, but were cold and silvery, was on the whole as genial and comfortable as what our memories kept note of two thousand miles away ; if we should go up and knock at the door whether they admit us, and whether they would keep us standing in our dew-damp garments in the-shivery hall, or turn us over to the servants, or introduce us at once to their own parlor, the more elderly looking affectionately upon us, while the young should regard us as invested with a species of romance, coming thus suddenly in upon them from the rapid, swollen river—and each should vie with the other to make us so very much at home.

Even while we were discoursing thus, and indulging our playful fancies, into which, nevertheless, there was woven a pensive half-melancholy thread, the heavy rain-clouds had been gradually mustering in the sky, and the towers and rounded domes and steeples of our imagined structures were visibly losing their distinct outline. The surface of the river seemed to have acquired a fresh liveliness, and the current an accelerated course. We were now in danger of coming suddenly upon some bigger boat, the shock of which in meeting might upset us ; and the bare possibility of having to struggle for life with those dark troubled waters, to reach the banks only for a more fearful and loathsome struggle with the alligators, snakes, or wild beasts of those parts, added much to the chilly discomfort of our position. In order to avoid this contingency our boatmen began to yell in the most savage and uncouth manner, which made us think that they had studied the music of the prowlers in the woods, with whose howling voices they had probably been familiar from childhood. Still we went on, our boatmen

pulling vigorously at their oars, in the hope of reaching Gatun before the worst—while the heavens, and earth, and water darkened about us. Our helmsman, who was a tall, gaunt native, of the true Ethiopian stamp, stood bolt upright in the stern, jabbering long sentences in a spiteful manner, as it seemed to us, at the oarsmen, at the close of each of which they sent up the unearthly yell before alluded to.

And now the rain began, a few big drops first, and then, as it were, a continuous sheet of water falling bodily from the sky. In such a rain as this, on this very river, boats have filled with water as caravans have been covered up by sand in the desert, and gone down beneath its surface, and with all their precious freight been heard of no more. God forgive us, we may fare no better. Our boatmen, however, are in no ways put out by it, but pull vigorously ahead, and occasionally address themselves to us and say, "*mucha agua*," something in the same tone in which one observes at home that it is a fine day. When we become very cold and drenched, and are sure that we are all in the first stage of Chagres fever, we ask them how much farther to Gatun, and they invariably answer "*poco tiempo*." But the water continues to pour down, and there is already a foot of it in the bottom of our boat, and we are soaked through, and our feet and ankles feel as if made of wood, and our boatmen go on howling, and the river goes on increasing every minute in its rapid course, till we know for a certainty that if we should strike a bigger boat, it will be all over with us—and still no Gatun! There was one boat which we passed lying under a big tree by the river's bank, which showed a light, and hearing the howls of our boatmen, hailed us to know if we were going on. I answered "yes," and a minute afterwards they hailed again to say that we were going *down* river, probably thinking that we belonged to their party, and had somehow

got our boat twisted in the darkness. A moment or two afterwards we saw Gatun.

There it was, quite another looking place from what it was when we left it on the afternoon previous. It seemed as if there were a thousand little dots of light, floating stationary in the darkness which enveloped it, and amongst them all was a larger light, which we decided must emanate from the lantern of the American hotel. Almost instantaneously after the first appearance of these lights, we were there, alongside of the bank, with some two score of boats on either side, and such shouting, yelling, blowing of horns, and other instruments, jabbering of natives, discharging of guns and pistols in quite a promiscuous manner, barking of dogs, and squealing of pigs, I never heard before. Truly, after our lonesome sail upon the river, in "night, and storm, and darkness," it was quite refreshing to feel ourselves again surrounded by such an unterrified body of the sovereigns of our native land. They made the old place redolent of riotous life and fun. They were everywhere about the diggings—smoking desperately in the rain half way up the bank, taking drinks, and smoking in their boats; others strong in Goodyear and Mackintosh, preparing to go out in quest of adventures, and inquiring of their neighbors in the next boat, where was the best quarter for door bells, knockers, and barbers' poles; others grouped in the vicinity of the lantern, in front of the American house; and others still among the lesser lights, trafficking with the natives, or bargaining for a night's lodging, in the apartments communicated with by the notched stick. There were, doubtless, some there who wished themselves away, home again in the quiet routine of their old life; but if so, they were of a retiring nature, and not noticed in the crowd who seemed bent on having a good time at all hazards.

"House ahoy!" sang out a big boat which had edged its way into the bank, directly alongside of us, hailing the lantern—"Any spare rooms?"

"How many are there of you?" replied a voice, which was not that of the proprietor.

"About thirty."

"Well, we can accommodate you." There was a roar of laughter followed, which we supposed was at this clever imposition, but it appeared that it was at a man with an umbrella, and a good deal of speculation was immediately set on foot as to where *he* came from.

"Now, then, supper for thirty," sang out the same voice from the adjoining boat, speaking again to the lantern.

"All right," returned the voice from the bank.

There were two Frenchmen in this boat, who were among the last to leave her. One was a very fat man, and the other a very thin one; but they were equally unsuccessful in getting up the wet and slippery bank. After two or three failures, they at length mutually agreed to try it together; so, locking arms, they once more started on their adventurous course. They were nearly at the top, when they again slipped and slid back to the bottom. "N'importe," said the fat one, as they started afresh, "nous allons bien souper."

"Oui," replied the other, "nous allons bien souper."

And off they went again, to return in the same abrupt and undignified manner. Poor devils, it was really too pitiable to think of what a wretchedly defective reed their supper was leaning upon. Every time they set off, it was with the same promise to themselves of a good supper awaiting them on the hill; but at length they gave it up, and I undertook to console them, by informing them of the true state of affairs in that direction. This they were very glad to believe, and had great sport over it. One of their party came

back soon after, and swore that there was not a mouthful of anything to eat in the place, and that the hotel was nothing more nor less than a hydropathic institution, where they charged two dimes for brandy and water, and threw in a small *douche* gratis.

All this time it was still raining, and without any signs of clearing up. It was out of the question for our women folk to think of landing; and except that we had plenty of company (which, the old proverb tells us, misery loves), we might about as well have been on our way down the river. So, when our boatmen returned, fortified with a copious quantity of *aguardente*, we acceded at once to their proposition to proceed. I was fortunately successful in negotiating with the supperless Frenchmen for a rubber cloth to cover our awning with, a pile of blankets for the women and children, and a bottle of Otard for myself, which appliances made us a shade more comfortable, at all events.

Again we looked out upon the thousand dots of light, now growing dim behind us, and heard more and more faintly the boisterous uproar of the motley crowd we were leaving—again we were alone with the river and the rain, with no sound save its beating on the stream and its shores, and the jabbering and howling of our boatmen, now more spirited than ever. How lonesome we felt again! There was something so chilling in the feeling, that we were actually alone with that same dark, silent, serpentine river that had sent desolation to many a hearthside afar, and was still flowing on at our very side, as merciless and remorseless as ever.

A huge, lumbering, black-looking object, directly before us, approaching us, almost upon us; and now a sonorous voice from it, calling out, "Starboard your helm—starboard!" which is answered by an increase of jabbering on the part of our helmsman, and a multitude of *carahos* from the oars-

men. It is alongside of us, and proves to be a large barge, with some twenty or thirty passengers. As we rush by, it gives us a parting lick on the larboard quarter, which has no other effect than to twist us a little out of our course, and give a livelier zest to the *carahos* of our boatmen. It has hardly got fairly by us, when a voice again comes from it, inquiring if we will take "Brown" along with us, as he has got enough of California, and wishes to return home; which cool proposition, as we have not previously known "Brown," and think it possible that he may not prove a desirable acquaintance, under the circumstances, I respectfully decline. We speedily lose sight of the great, black, lumbering barge, behind a bend in the river, and are only aware of its existence from the fact, that the plaintive echoes of "Rosin the Bow" are now dying away over the silent waters in our wake.

And it still keeps on raining, raining, raining; and our boat keeps up its speed, and our boatmen keep up their monotonous howling; and whether it be the Otard, of which we have all taken several sips; or whether it be that we have got used to the scene, and find it dull; or, what is more probable, are so wearied out after our long day's travel, that tired nature claims and will have her due; somehow or other, we all fall asleep. I say all; for I am sure that I kept awake until the last one finally dropped off, from pure exhaustion. I have an indistinct idea that, immediately after my departure for the land of Nod, a hand, as of the helmsman, was thrust into my top-coat pocket, where was the Otard before alluded to, and something taken therefrom. If this was the case, I am sure that it was the Otard, as that was gone when I awoke; although, of course, I might have been dreaming, and the Otard might have fallen out, and somehow got into the river.

How long we slept, I know not, but I, for one, had some

curious dreams. I dreamt that I was in a whaleboat on the Pacific, with Tom and the Major, steering for an island, which we had almost reached, full of fruits, and birds, and game, and turtle, and possessing a most delightful climate; and then I was alone, somewhere in the Gila country, travelling through the sand in quest of a great and wealthy city which I was sure existed somewhere in that mysterious region; and then I was scouring the pampas of Buenos Ayres, on a wild horse, without any particular end in view; and then I had finally come home a very rich, but sallow and sick old man, and I was lying in bed, while my only sister, who had not changed any in all these long years, sat placidly sewing at my side; and in every one of these scenes I was so tired and sad. And then I awoke, and we all awoke, and there was Chagres.

We came in to the bank under the stern of the brig "*Bella del Mar*," opposite to the Irving House. There was no one stirring on the levee, except about a dozen young fellows who had come down alongside of us to hear the news, thinking us to be from Panama. It had cleared off, and was so very bright and serene a night now, that our previous experience of "storm and darkness" seemed to have been but part of an unpleasant dream; and old Chagres, that miserable, vagabondish place, was of a verity to us "a sight for sair een." We could see, too, as easily as by broad daylight, that these young men were a little unsteady in their movements, as if overcome by liquor.

I inquired if we could get into any hotel at that hour, for I supposed it to be near dawn.

"Oh, we're bound to see you safe in," said half-a-dozen together; "we're going to the Irving, now, after Samuels—come along."

"Yes," said one of the number, in explanation, "we're on

a bit of a bender to-night. It's some anniversary, as near as we can recollect, and this dog of a Samuels slipped off at the opening of the third basket. So we're going to have him out and administer something wholesome."

"Come along," said they all together.

Under their auspices we landed, and followed by our natives carrying the baggage, proceeded to the Irving House, where our new friends kicked furiously at the door, and then made a formal demand for Samuels. But it appeared that Samuels was not forthcoming, and the exasperated proprietor refused to open his doors at that unseasonable hour, and treated the story of a party from down river being in attendance outside, with entire contempt. A council of war was then held by the besiegers; and the result was, that a large piece of joist was brought up from the bank by the whole strength of the company, six of a side, and thrust with all the vigor of the united twelve against the inhospitable door. The door did not yield at first, but the twelve did, and falling with the heavy timber upon them, one half of the number were considerably bruised. The second attack differed from the first, in that it was the starboard half in lieu of the larboard who received the timber this time in falling, and were likewise considerably bruised. Upon the third attack, the door was beaten in, and we all entered.

I presume that the young men were successful in their search for Samuels, for having occasion to go down stairs for a pitcher of fresh water, after we had retired to our rooms for the balance of the night, I saw a haggard and sleepy-looking gentleman perched upon a stool on the table, with his head firmly encased in a certain household utensil, which shall be nameless. I inferred from appearances, that he was about to be treated with a mixture of something which one of the party was preparing in a small basin, but what the whole-

some compound was, I did not learn. I saw the same individual the next day, with his head somewhat damaged and swollen, and am inclined to believe that the aforesaid utensil, having tightened upon his cranium after repeated potations, it was found necessary to break it thereon, before it could be removed. And this was one of the features of what the Chagres boys termed "a bender."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.

IT is, probably, hardly necessary for me at this stage of my narrative to say, that I have all along been quite free of apprehensions of suiting that self-sufficient and orderly class, whose ideas seldom go beyond their daily task; who can see no good out of their own private Jerusalem; who look with horror upon an adventure, or anything which comes to them, bearing the guise or savor of romance; who bear indelibly stamped upon their countenances the motto of the old lady who bought the *caul* of David Copperfield—"Let there be no meandering;" who, if they read at all, read to be instructed, to weigh down their memory with a load of facts; and have no undignified suspicions of what is included in the poetry, the drollery, the dreamery of life. On the contrary, it is confidently expected that this class of people will long since have thrown aside the book with a contemptuous "Fudge! Does the writer take us to be fools, that we should believe this mass of stuff?" These people consider nothing as worthy their attention but what lies within the very limited circle of their own observation or experience. They are the Thomases of the world, and require even to thrust their fingers into the print of the nails, or they will not believe.

As if oftentimes one single thought which the novelist pens in bitterest sincerity of heart, were not a thousand fold

more true, because more earnest, than all the dull acts of their unvaried life. As if, though they would smile to hear us say so, the very abject man of crime, when considered in relation to the strength of the temptations which he has withstood, and the more terrible strength of that temptation to which he finally succumbed, were not oftentimes more honest and virtuous than they.

I do not then deem it necessary to offer to the reader any apology for the unusual character which the incidents of the day I am about to describe may happen to possess. It is not my fault if they are somewhat strange. The world is a wide one, and there is not a day passes in any part of it, but bringeth forth far stranger things than these. And now having relieved my mind in a measure, by putting forth this disclaimer, or whatever you please to call it, I promise for the future to stick more closely to the thread of my narrative.

It was after three o'clock in the afternoon, before the Falcon was off on her home-bound flight, and I was on shore again in weary Chagres. My first visit on landing was to the Empire City Hotel, to see my old friends, Vale and Parkins, and get the latest reports from Vitti, who, as I had casually learned in the morning, was now confined in the old fort. I should have put up at the Empire on the previous night, but as hotel-keeping was a new business with Mr. Vale, I had an undefined apprehension that he might not have been successful in it, and that we should be more comfortable at the Irving, which indeed, at that time, was the model hotel of Chagres. In this it seems that I was not far wrong, for on arriving at my old loitering-place, I could not avoid remarking, at first sight, an air of nudity and forlorn abandonment, that would have been melancholy had it not been so beautifully characteristic of the pre-

siding genius of the place. The lower part of the house was deserted, and had a damp and dismal smell about it like a cellar. The bar-room was vacant, both of loafers and liquor. It was another failure in Vale's multifarious pursuits, and had it not been for a slip of paper, with a hand pointing to the staircase, and the words "not dead but sleeping," written thereon, and meant to be waggishly explanatory of the true state of things, I should have left the house under the impression that both Vale and Parkins had departed this place, if not in fact this life, for a better.

Pursuing the direction in which the hand pointed, I reached the chamber where I had already seen the French Marquis and poor Parkins in an unenviable state of health, to find there another candidate for the pleasures of illness, —even Senor Quanto Valley himself. He was stretched upon the sofa, with a table wheeled to his side, covered with a Napoleonesque assortment of maps, plans, and other documents, while his ex-partner, again upon his legs, thanks to the treatment of Doctor G——, officiated in the character of nurse.

"This comes of fillibustering it," said the latter as I entered, with a glance towards Vale, in which contempt and reproof were alike mingled,—“you see the old fool would make a public idiot of himself, by attempting the rescue of that madcap Vitti, and this is what comes of it.”

Vale was certainly rather the worse for his adventure, whatever it might have been, to which Parkins alluded. His huge face was gashed and torn in places, to the great cost of his hair and whiskers. One arm was in a sling, and from his manner of reclining, it was easily inferred that some other limbs had likewise suffered damage. Nothing put down, nevertheless, by the shattered position in which I had found him, he extended his whole hand to me in salu-

tation, and observed, with a happy smile, that there was no evil without an attendant good; and added, that Parkins would give me the particulars of the assault in which he led a body of determined men to the rescue of Vitti at the fort, which enterprise failed of success, through an unforeseen accident that befel the leader thereof; thinking, I suppose, in trusting Parkins with this narration, that I knew his weak points well enough to make due allowances for anything he might utter derogatory to the character or courage of him—Vale.

"Well," said Parkins, taking up the tale in quite an enthusiastic manner, "the blasted old fool, yesterday afternoon, after having worked all the morning, like a nigger slave, as he is—to get Vitti *into* the fort——"

"For certain reasons," suggested Vale, in a parenthesis, and with an approving smile.

"Must wheel suddenly right about face," continued Parkins, "and plan a rescue for the same night. So he gets together all the young scapegraces of the place, gives them a free treat—gets most of them almighty corned——"

"Which explains the actual state of the bar," I observed.

"Exactly—and then, just after dark, leads off for the other side. Such a set! There wasn't one of them knew what they were going for, for old Quanto, with his usual bombast, had, towards the close of the treat, made a speech in which there was so much about the memory of Washington, Bunker Hill, principles of '76, glorious 4th, and so on, that they were completely bewildered, and seemed to think it was some great anniversary, and that they were to celebrate it by firing off the guns of the fort, killing a few natives, or something of the kind. Why, some of the rowdiest came back after the downfall of old Quixote, and persisted in finishing our champagne, drinking 'the day we celebrate,' and such nonsense."

"I met some of this class quite early this morning," said I.

"Quite likely—they had a charge sufficient for three days. Well, they got across the river somehow or other, and went staggering up the hill where the fort is, in the most absurd manner——"

"To the tune of 'I see them on their winding way,'" interrupted Vale, who was reviewing the exploit with his mind's eye, and evidently looked upon it as the event of his life.

"But as it happened," resumed Parkins, "just before they reached the moat, our great hero of a leader, in taking too much sheer in *his* winding way, went over the bank, and just missed breaking his preposterous neck. He had the luck, however, to fetch up against a projecting rock, which did the business for his right arm and left leg, and then they fished him back and brought him home, and a pretty mess I'm with it all!"

"So far so good," said Vale, with a complimentary smile in the direction of Parkins, "and now for the moral of the tale. For the injuries done to my person, in the attempt to save a fellow-countryman, from what I now believe to be unmerited punishment, the republic of New Grenada must answer. And, sir, I have this day perfected my plan. This fall of mine is not for nothing—I shall come up again. Yea, sir, I have perfected my plan for seizing this key to the Isthmus, and declaring it, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a portion of our glorious republic, the birth-place of Washington, and which has given to the world the sublime spectacle of a successful effort at self-government, and a Fourth of July. There are those who wait but the promulgation of my project to second me. Sir, Napoleon, who was likewise a self-made man, in his younger days was wont to say, that if he could secure for his country the possession of Suez,

he would control the commerce of the East. Since the time of that very clever man—I think even Parkins will admit this—things have changed; the commerce of the East is destined to turn its face backward from its old path; and this Isthmus, which I am to declare ours, is the channel through which its immense wealth shall flow.”

While Mr. Vale was thus discoursing, in the delirium of fever, he had partly risen from his couch, and, with his left hand spread upon his maps and plans, seemed to forget his bodily pain, and to hold himself ready for the onset at a moment's notice. Parkins did his best to keep him down; but he too had the Chagres mark most unmistakably impressed upon him, and was feeble as a child. The desolate condition of these two men, attached thus strongly and strangely to each other, was not a scene to contemplate without emotion. I saw not the burlesque character of it exclusively; I felt more in the condition of Byron, when he said—

“And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
’Tis that I may not weep——”

“But,” said I, with a jerk as it were, for I saw the necessity of calming Vale by a change of topic, “how goes the hotel, my dear fellow—chock full, eh?”

“Why, not exactly,” responded Vale, seizing likewise upon this topic with alacrity. “I have an idea for a hotel.”

“There he goes again,” observed Parkins, despairingly

“I would build one out in the neighborhood of your old camel encampment, a hotel equal to any in the States, provided with all the comforts and luxuries of our own homes. Such a hotel as this would do more for this place, than all the prayers of the saints could effect in any other way. Just think of a poor devil, wet and weary, half dead with his fatigue of crossing the Isthmus, coming to a place like

home, as I mean to make the Atlantic Steamship Hotel; why, sir, he would stow away the proprietor's name in his heart, and keep it there always afterwards, as a benefactor of his race."

"Very likely," said I, "but you forget that this town will not last long. When the railroad is completed, Chagres must be abandoned for Navy Bay. No one would invest capital, as you propose, with such a prospect."

"Another idea," said Vale, eagerly, with the same delirious glitter in his eye. "What do you think of settling at Navy Bay—the first man, I mean the first regular permanent resident, and becoming the pioneer citizen of the place—I have thought of that too. What a figure I should cut at dinner celebrations, in later years, when the new city shall boast its hundred thousand inhabitants—I should be the Daniel Boone of the Isthmus. I should immortalize myself."

"Only, that you would starve several years before your tremendous greatness would have a chance to begin," observed the incorrigible Parkins.

In the course of the conversation which ensued, I obtained no further news of Vitti. He was still shut up in the fort, awaiting the time when he should be taken to Panama for trial. His sister had not been heard from. It was late for me to think of returning to Dos Hermanas that night, even if a boat could have been had, which, considering the number of passengers by the Falcon and Crescent City, was somewhat doubtful. And, as I was sure of an opportunity of proceeding early on the following morning by the steamer Ralph. Rivas, I resolved to go over to the fort at once, and communicate with Vitti, determined in my own mind to get at something which should serve as a clue to all this mystery. I left Vale and Parkins, not doubting but that I should see or hear from them again; but up to this

moment, I never have. Poor Sampson Vale—how pleasantly the foolish dreamer would smile at the application of this epithet to *him*—I often wonder if he is still above ground—leading the same old visionary life, chasing the golden-winged butterflies of his fancy, but never fairly grasping them, through the blustering world, with the weary Solomon dragging after, and almost blinded by the dust in his wake. And yet Mr. Vale, after all, was but one of a very numerous class in the world. The dread of being nobody is the bug-bear of their unhappy lives, and so they wear themselves away, the very nothingest of nobodies, simply because they are always hankering after something to which it is not possible they can ever reach.

It was raining heavily as, having crossed the river, immediately after the interview above narrated, I toiled up the steep rocky hillside leading to the fort. I think I never felt more spiritless and sad. The parting that day with those dearest to me on earth; the melancholy situation of our party on the river; the yet more melancholy one of the friends I had just left, and the situation of him I was going to see, most melancholy of all; my own solitariness, and perchance the presentiment of an approaching mishap; the dreary weather,—all combined to blacken the deep gloom which hung over me like a cloud. I picked my way along over the loose, slippery rocks, and felt desperate enough. Even when I passed the point on the bluff where Vale had slid off, my imagination was powerless to bring before me the ludicrousness of his adventure. I passed into the outer fortress over the tottering bridge, and went doggedly by the soldiers stationed at the gateway leading to the inner. I should quite have liked a bit of a row at that moment, to have waked me up a little; but the poor fellows on sentry were in no mood for anything of the kind. The idea of Vale attacking these

people! One half of the liquor spent in treating the assaulting party would have bought a free pass for Vitti a dozen times over.

I was in no mood for admiring the excellence of the work; its stupendous sea-wall, formed partly by nature; its solid cemented floor; its lines of dungeons under ground, running deep beneath the surface of the outer fortress; its magnificent position, overlooking the broad fields of the Atlantic, and effectually protecting the hamlet couched at its base; its heavy, time-stained guns; its sentry-boxes, black and decaying, suggestive of so many long, weary hours of a soldier's life; its piles of rusty balls; its brick and cemented, but ruinous buildings; its one other building, partly constructed of similar materials, and partly of wood, the quarters of the officers in the old time, the present jail of Chagres. It was a type of the power and magnificence of a past age, crumbling away before the higher power and truer magnificence of our own.

Not seeing any one in particular who seemed to be in any sort of authority there, I at once entered the wooden building, and passing up stairs, found Vitti alone in a bare and extremely desolate-looking apartment. He was half lying upon a cot with his head resting upon his arm, gazing moodily at the floor. My entrance caused a scampering among the cockroaches, who, emboldened by the prisoner's apathy, had ventured from their holes.

"Vitti, my old boy," said I, as cheerfully as possible, on entering, "how goes it, eh? not altogether down-hearted, I hope?"

As he raised his head and extended his hand to greet me, I could not avoid being struck with the great change which had come over him. He was thin, pale, and haggard; but not quite given over to despair. On the contrary, there was

a twitching of his muscles and flashing of his eye, which showed a great struggle of some sort still at work within. This was a favorable sign. He seemed, as near as I could judge at a glance, like a man groping in mystery, and vainly harassing himself for a clue. He did not speak to me at first, but watched me closely, as if he would read my errand in my face. It was certainly not there—at least what he expected—and then he ventured to say, still holding me tight by the hand, "My sister, do you know anything of her?"

"No," said I, "but I am sure that she is safe, and that no harm has come to her."

Oh, the heart-thrilling earnestness of the "thank God!" which broke from Vitti as I said this! It made me tremble to think that he really believed me. He kept still looking at me, and squeezing my hand, as if to be certain that he had really heard those words of mine; and then I saw tears begin to gather in his eyes, and then they rolled down his cheeks, and made him keep his hold upon me all the tighter for fear that shower of joy and gratitude might hide me from his sight, and the delicious dream be over.

"Vitti," said I, again, solemnly, for it was truly a solemn moment, and I felt that the eternal happiness of two lives depended on the answer—"tell me, Vitti, with your own lips, that you are innocent of the crime they charge you with. I do not doubt it, only let me hear it from your own lips."

In an instant his whole expression changed. The former cloud of terror and doubt rolled away, and he was in expression the same brave, frank, daring boy as ever. "Ha!" said he, "that was spared me. Had any wrong been done by him to my sister, I would have murdered him, and laughed at anything hell could add to my torments. The murdering of a man would have been nothing. No,—I

found him dying—and was with him to the last, calling upon him to tell me of my sister—but he never spoke to me a word. He died, and it was the terrible uncertainty of her fate that was killing me. I could not find it possible to decide on what to do, and I have been in a stupor until now. But now I shall go out and find her. My sister lives—as she did in what seems to me another earlier state of existence—so changed have I become in the last two days; and all the powers of earth cannot prevent our reunion. Come, let us leave this miserable, rotten old place, and go out; there is a whole band of angels in the air above us, to protect us on our way.”

Even as Vitti spoke, in the rapture of the moment, a golden stream of light poured into the room from the west. We rose up, hand in hand, to go forth. As we issued from the house, guarded only by a few superannuated natives in the menial department, the whole world seemed suddenly to have become fresh and new again. Broad patches of blue sky, in one of which was the clear bright sun, now almost setting, gave to the heavens a cheerful aspect above. The broad ocean wore its white caps jauntily in the purified atmosphere—the broader expanse of hill-side and forest, waving with its mass of richest verdure, like another ocean, with mysteries and voices as sublime and solemn as the first, wore every tint of gold and green. The river, with the life upon its bosom, the houses in the vale beneath us, every homeliest object within the circle of our view, each had its own face brighter for the pearly drops which had kissed it. And who in a mood to enjoy it like Vitti? The few words of hope and sympathy which I had spoken, had been to him as a new birth, and he was like a child in his sportive appreciation. We walked towards the ramparts, for we were not quite prepared to venture on a sally forth.

"Last evening," said Vitti, "as I walked here alone, I saw a vision yonder which made me doubt for a moment the soundness of my reason."

He pointed across the water to a point in the vicinity of the small river, which I have heretofore noticed as flowing into the sea hard by where stood our camel encampment.

"All day long," continued he, "the image of my sister had been before me like an actual presence; and as I stood out here, at about this very hour, I saw her still; but now she was afar off, gliding like a spirit along the beach in that direction. It was not strange that I should fancy her there, for it was her old favorite walk. I rubbed my eyes for another look—the vision seemed so real and palpable—but when I looked again, she was gone. Nevertheless, I dreamed of her as still there. But good Heavens! what is that?—I see the same form again!"

I strained my eyes in the direction indicated, and in all the wide reach of the magnificent panorama, which the sun was gilding so gorgeously with his latest rays, I too saw but one figure, and it was certainly that of a woman pacing solitarily along the shore.

"I see it," said I, and although the figure was very indistinct to my eyes, from the great distance, something impelled me to cry out, "and it is she;—yes, Vitti, it is your sister!"

"And do you really see it?" said he, in a low and solemn tone. "Oh, God, can it be?"

There was no doubt of it—there was really a slight and graceful figure hovering there—so slight, one might have been pardoned in the strange beauty of the hour for believing it to be a spirit. But I was satisfied. Already a possible interpretation of the whole affair was passing through my mind.

"Vitti," said I, still holding him by the hand, and speak-

ing as calmly as I could, "this serene sky and tranquil earth, rising up out of the ruins of the storm, is a type of what you also are to expect. Leave the arrangement of the thing to me. I shall find your sister, and bring her to you here. You cannot go forth now, but to-night you may. And to-morrow you and your sister may both be safe on board the Crescent City. In another land you may be happier than you could ever hope to be in this."

The form of the solitary woman had disappeared from the beach. Vitti, holding my hand like an obedient child, walked back with me to the house. I think at that moment, if an angel had come down from the sky, flapping his white wings about us, he would not have trusted him so implicitly as me.

"Do not be long away," said he, as I left him in his room—no more a prison-house, but the rendezvous where he was soon to meet his soul's twin; and then as I was going down the rickety old stairs, he called me back.

"Stay a moment," said he, with tears pouring down his face; "it is my belief that the sinless have power with God for the pardon of the sinful. Now hear me. There is one angel, though she still lives on earth, who shall be taught both here and hereafter, as by the secret bond of sympathy between us I know how to teach her, to weary Heaven's Majesty for your eternal good. There is no other recompense fitting for a deed of kindness like this. Now go, and take this certainty along with you!"

I went out from the old fort, the grim exponent of man's meaner passions. I recrossed the river, and taking my way along the marginal path I had often travelled before, came to the spot where we had recently encamped. The sun was setting. The broad sea was there like a huge shaggy, but not unfriendly monster, pawing upon the sand, licking it with

its great white lolling tongue, and growling in its deep throat as was its wont. I sat down, for a moment, to rest upon a fragment of a former wreck, and was reviewing in my mind the incidents of the day, when I heard a voice close beside me, but nearer to the stream than where I sat—a voice singing. I needed not to see the form of its owner then, for I knew it well. That voice—that tone of voice—it told its own story; yes, in its uncertain aim, its shrill and unsteady pitch, its sobbing, gasping accompaniment—the oldest of all old stories, a disordered intellect consequent upon blighted love, a story told so touchingly in the history of fair Ophelia and the gentle Bride of Lammermoor—a story that we do not often hear in the busy world, because stifled in the walls of a mad-house, or wasting its echoes in the more sullen and certain seclusion of the grave, but none the less frequently enacting for all that.

I rose up from where I was sitting, and listened; I could make out no words, and know not if this plaintive outpouring of a clouded heart found vent in words; but the sentiment conveyed to my mind thereby I afterwards tried to fix in “a local habitation.”

The following may not suggest to the reader the depth of sorrow which seemed to well up from the singer’s heart, and I give it only as my feeble interpretation of the same:—

SONG.

“Let me go where waves are wildest,
Breaking on a lonesome shore;
Where the winds that erst were mildest,
’Long the solemn beaches roar.
There a sea-bird wild and storm-tost,
Vainly flies the waters o’er;
Here a maid, as lorn and love-lost,
Weepeth, wailleth evermore.”

"Day by day the waters gather,
And the waves are leaping high;
So in calm and blackest weather,
Still the lone sea-bird must fly.
There's a brain is mad with fever,
There's a wild and tear-dimmed eye;
There's a heart is breaking ever,
And will break—until I die."

It now occurred to me, that once, having gone back some distance from the beach, on a tramp with the Major, we had come upon the ranche of an old native, who, in the course of our conversation, had mentioned the names of Vitti and his sister; I had forgotten in what connexion. It was probable that Carlotta had been secreted with him during these past few days; but for what? This I was soon to learn.

As she came into view, keeping close by the margin of the stream, and walking towards the sea, I observed in her the same wonderful grace and beauty as ever; but could not help likewise noticing, with the keenest regret, that uncertainty of gait which bespeaks a lack of purpose in the mind; she did not see me till I was quite near to her, and when I uttered her name softly, she sprang back as if stung. Seeing and recognising me, she became quiet, however, and seemed to await the delivery of my message.

"I come from your brother, Mademoiselle," said I, using the French language.

"Yes," said she. "He is well?"

"Hardly," said I; "he has missed you for a few days, and suffers much anxiety on that account. Will you return with me to him?"

"Is he alone?" inquired she, with a very strange, unnatural calmness of tone.

A new idea broke upon me. "He is," said I. "The French Marquis de G——"

"Well."

"The Marquis left Chagres some three days ago."

"Well."

"And is since dead at Dos Hermanas."

"Dead," said the girl, repeating the word slowly several times, as if trying to comprehend its meaning. "Dead—dead—dead and buried?"

"Dead and buried," said I.

All at once a twinkling ray of reason, like the first star of evening, shot up into her eyes, and she repeated the words more anxiously, "dead and buried."

"Dead and buried," said I again, and watched her closely all the while. She did not weep, as the real truth came gradually to her mind; she did not show signs of fear or sorrow, but a quiet sentiment of peace and satisfaction seemed to be settling down upon her, and her countenance changed, even as had her brother's, when I assured him that she still lived.

"And so," said she, eagerly, almost gladly, as it seemed, "the Marquis is dead—gone away to be with the spirits, in the spirit world—is this so?"

"It is," said I. "I have seen his grave."

"Oh, for this," cried she, "may God be praised! No matter how he died—he is happy—he is with the blest. Now I shall not be mad any longer. Now I shall love him, and it will not make me mad. Now I shall love him, and no earth-stain shall ever come upon our love, to blast it. Now I shall love him for ever, and shall not be an outcast for it. See here, sir, you are married, and live in the sanctity of domestic life, and know not from what a chasm I am saved. I loved this man, when something told me that to have declared my love would have been my ruin, and brought tears and wretchedness to all who love me. And this was

making me mad. There was no safety but in flight; and yet I seemed to be flying from my duty to poor Angelo, but God knows I could not help it. Had it been otherwise, we had perished together. Now my love is in heaven; no blighting curse of earth can reach it. Forgive me what seems unworthy in this confession; could you see me as I now see myself, I am sure you would. And now tell me of Angelo, for I will at once go with you to him. Oh, strange, joyful transformation; he is dearer to me than ever."

"But, Mademoiselle, your brother is in the fort."

"Ha!"—

"Arrested on suspicion of the murder of the Marquis."

"Good God! from what are we saved!"

"Even so, Mademoiselle"—

"And if I had yielded, this supposition had been correct."

"Then you believe in Angelo's innocence?"

Her look, her triumphant smile, was the same as that with which her brother had thrown the charge from him. She saw the accusation only in its absurdity.

"My brother a murderer, and without a certain cause! You little know him! Many a hasty blow has he given, but never a mortal one; many a life has he saved, and many a generous deed has he done; nothing mean or cowardly can ever come from him!"

And yet, thought I to myself, in hot blood such a thing might happen, although the fond eyes of a sister's love could see no such possibility.

We at once set off on our return to the town, picking our way along the narrow path leading through the wood, for the twilight is of short duration in those latitudes, and it was now quite dark. I explained to Carlotta more fully the position of Vitti, and the necessity for his immediate release.

Upon one thing we were perfectly agreed, that the snake-tamer, whose name turned out to be Lowry, was the author of the murder, if such had been committed; a belief in which I was greatly strengthened, upon learning the fact that the Marquis bore about his person effects of great value.

It is a principle in law that a man is not bound to criminate himself, and I do not see why a writer should not have the privilege of putting in a like exemption plea, when he is liable to be placed in a ludicrous or undignified position; otherwise I might feel bound to relate a small mishap which occurred to myself just as we were on the point of entering the fort, and prevented my being present at the reunion of Vitti and his sister, and was attended likewise with sundry other unpleasant consequences. I might define it as consisting of a slide, while groping a little in advance of my companion, through the "storm and darkness" which had succeeded to our late golden burst of sunshine, and its silvery wake of star-light, from the same break in the precipitous bank that had brought Sampson Vale's adventure to so abrupt a termination. I might go on to tell how I was not equally fortunate with that chivalric gentleman, but went tearing through the bushes and bumping against the sharp rocky edges in my descent, till I finally was brought up by the loose round rocks at the very bottom of the bluff. How I lay there insensible, I have no means of knowing for what length of time, till the rising tide, lashing my temples, restored the brain to action, and made it cognizant of my physical state. How I then essayed to stir, and did succeed in creeping a little at long intervals towards where, the occasional, for the storm of rain and thunder raged unabated, flashes of lightning showed me was the native town. Suffering greatly from bodily pain, though evidently whole as yet in limb,

how I was all that night in the same situation, and did not touch the welcome mud of the old town till the sun, who seemed on that morning to have come up for me alone, sent his advance beams over the vapory hills before me, and made the growling storm retreat before him, and yet, how during the long hours—I am proud to be able to write this—my thoughts were not wholly of my weary self, but left me often and went up to that decaying house, where two noble and loving hearts had that night met, as I could not but feel in a great measure through my means, and revelled in the infinite joy of that reunion; how they went often further still, and were with those dear ones, quiet and snug in the saloons of the *Falcon*, cleaving the rough waves of the Caribbean. What was bodily suffering to me then? All this and much more I might relate, but, as I have already said, I do not see why a writer should be held, even though he profess in all his narratives to keep nothing back from his dear friend, the reader, to place himself in a comic pillory from which he may not find it easy to descend, and I feel quite sure that that friend would not exact it merely for his momentary gratification.

Be it enough, then, for me to say that a very early hour of that morning beheld me on the quarter-deck of the *Ralph Rivas*, fortified with a good breakfast, and smoking a genuine “*habaguana*” in perfect peace and quietude of mind. This mental condition will be understood when I add, that I had received, but a moment before starting, a most affectionate letter from Vitti, expressing great solicitude as to my condition—confound him!—after my mishap of the previous night, and informing me of the safe arrival of himself and sister on board the steamship “*Crescent City*.”

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OFFICIAL DISCLOSURE.

“O’ER the glad waters of the dark blue sea,” borne onward by her swift-revolving wheels, as if they were truly the broad wings of the steam-god, goes the home-bound Falcon with her precious freight. Up along the still surface of the sultry river, with its thick-laid hem of deepest verdure, we take again our toilsome way. Dos Hermanas is behind us; and so, before the day is over—another such day as our first upon the river, but varied with new sights and wonders of winged forms and “bloom and greenery”—is Vamos Vamos, Peña Blanca, Bajio Soldado, Aqua Salud, Barro Colorado, and perhaps other places of less note in history, whose names I do not now remember; and a little after sundown we arrive at the village of Palenquilla, a point on the river some fifteen or eighteen miles above Dos Hermanas. This is a genuine stopping-place; and one would think, from the sights and sounds along its water line, that the very same crowd of the untterrified whom we had left at Gatun, two nights previous, were here assembled, so similar are all these crowds in their general features. But Palenquilla of itself is not Gatun—not exactly. There are not so many native huts, but there are *two* American hotels; and on the night of our arrival there were several tents pitched, and fires built, and lanterns lit, up and down its long sloping banks; and in the clear but feeble star-light, one might easily have taken it for

a great rendezvous of the gipsies, tinkers, and all the strolling spirits of this restless world.

It is a theory of certain modern naturalists, that the distribution of rain over the American continents, owing to their form and situation in mid ocean, is far greater, on an average, than on the continents of the Old World; that, in consequence of this extraordinary humidity, the vegetable kingdom flourishes to a degree unknown elsewhere, while the animal is proportionally diminutive and feeble. Thus the alligator is a lesser representative of the crocodile of the Nile; the puma of the African lion; the lama of the camel. Nowhere is one more struck with the truth of this theory, applicable, at all events, to the lower latitudes, than while journeying on the river Chagres. Here, during an eternal summer, bloom and wither such immense varieties of the vegetable world, that the unpractised eye is wearied in its attempt to select the parts of the wondrous whole, which seems to have no beginning and no end, but to roll on like the ocean,

"Dark-heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime;"

and whether swayed by the gale, or clashing beneath the thunder-bolt, or murmuring gratefully to the gentle lappings of the summer wind, is equally "a glorious mirror where the Almighty's form" is seen. And here, too, beneath the shade of these majestic monarchs of the wood, the mango, the sycamore, and palm, man, the highest style of the animal, crawls languidly upon the bosom of his mother earth, unmindful, as it seems, of his glorious destiny, "content to share a coward life with venomous insects and the beasts of the jungle." Such, at any rate, has been heretofore the character of these wretched natives. Whether, with the infusion of new blood amongst them, there shall come more

subtleness to their brains, or quicksilver to their joints, remains to be seen.

I had passed a sluggishly pleasant day, not unmarked by certain quiet and rather humorous incidents. We had plenty of company in other boats on the river, and plenty of droll rencontres at the native ranches on its banks. These gold-seekers were, in one respect, like the full-fed priests we read about, who, while they live in shadowy hopes of the spiritual enjoyments of another world, are by no means disdainful of the corporeal pleasures of this, and seemed bent on having their full share of the passing fun. But it was more the calm delight of finding myself surrounded by my quondam friends, and losing, as it were, my weary identity in the thorough appreciation of their rough, frank, genial, or enthusiastic natures, that made me so sluggishly calm and cheerful. It is truly a glorious privilege that we possess of being able, at times, when the realities of our own one life seem to press hard upon us, to throw ourselves, so to speak, into the arms of happier or more buoyant natures, and live a little while in their lives. We are sad from solitary broodings; and so long as no light comes to us from without, the image of the world on our dull brain is hung with gloomy curtains. But let us break away from ourselves, and go into the thronged street, and how often is it that a face, radiant with innocence, hope, and joy, shall beam upon us, there dissipating, by its brightness, our gloomy fancies, and kindling, as with a torch, a ruddy fire at the hearthside of our musings. I have thought that even the criminal on the scaffold, catching sight of some childish, happy expression in the crowd below, might not feel himself so very forlorn, trusting, perhaps vaguely, that the long madness of his soul might yet be over; and, in the far eternity of revolving events, he might possibly get back to some stand-point whence he should look upon

creation with a cooler, healthier brain. If, as has been asserted by certain modern statesmen, there is a community in mankind's destiny, politically speaking, there is certainly no less, so far as his moral and social happiness is concerned. But, heigh-ho! where are we getting to? What has all this transcendentalism to do with the Isthmus?

The Major—I have him now before me as he was during all that day; his fine eye catching every object and form of beauty, and flashing with sincerest inward pleasure, while his words of flame darted into our hearts. His was a mind that had kept great company; and from its well stored depths the choicest passages of the old poets came bubbling up always at the right moment. He had the soul of a child—hopeful and enthusiastic. He was a companion to go round the world with, and make one wish at the end that the voyage had been twice as long.

As for Tom, the shakes being off, he was occupied principally in taking minute doses of quinine, in draughts of a dark-colored liquid, which Colonel Allen poured out of a four gallon demijohn at frequent intervals, and which smelt strongly of rum and burnt molasses, but which Monsieur Crapolet affirmed was brown sherry. The Colonel and Monsieur Crapolet likewise partook of the same beverage quite often, diluted of course with a little river water, although the Colonel seemed to cast a certain imputation upon the wine, derogatory to its quality, by observing with a shrug of his shoulders, and a slight tremor in his entire frame, immediately subsequent to a heavy dose, that “the subscriber was constitutionally opposed to bad liquor.” I noticed that Judge Smithers excused himself from partaking by an insinuation that there was too much of the monkey about it, but I am inclined to think that he made use of the term “monkey” in this connexion as a mere figure of speech.

"Speaking of fever," said Judge Smithers—"I say, Allen, are you ever troubled nowadays with your old complaint of typhoid?"

"No," said the subscriber, briefly.

"I mean," pursued the Judge, "the periodical attack which you were subject to while in the State House, at Jefferson City."

"The State House story!" cried we all.

"It's not much of a story," said Colonel Allen.

"But very characteristic," said the Judge.

"Debouchez!" said Monsieur Crapolet, with a gesture, expressive of thirsty impatience, thinking probably, that if we had got to have the story, the sooner it was begun the better.

"Is it to be a true story?" inquired Tom.

"Yes," replied the Judge, "this is one of Allen's true stories."

"As if the subscriber ever told any that were not," observed the Colonel, waggishly.

"As if," continued the Judge, following him up, and using a horse phrase, "an editor ever shied at the truth."

"Debouchez!" shouted Monsieur Crapolet again.

"Well, then, gentlemen," began the Colonel, "but really it is nothing of a story—you see the subscriber was once appointed to an office, in the State House, at Jefferson City."

"Governor?" inquired Tom.

"No," said the Colonel, "but it's nothing of a story—Judge, I would much rather you would tell it."

"Hey, g'long there, what are you 'bout!" said the Judge, with the air of a man taking a bluebottle from the nigh leader's ear.

"Well, then," began the Colonel again; "the subscriber had an office in the State House, under the Governor—a very

respectable office, which he was induced to accept to accommodate his friends and the public."

"The Colonel is always ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his friends," observed the Judge, in explanation.

"To illustrate which the aforesaid will have the pleasure of potating with his fellow voyager, Monsieur Crapolet," said the Colonel, thereby drawing our attention to the unhappy Frenchman, who sat gazing gloomily at the water alongside, as if it were a very dismal subject for contemplation.

"The State House story!" cried we all again, as soon as the potations were well over—not at all disposed to relinquish *our* treat.

"It's no story any way," persisted Allen, "the amount of it is—the subscriber was once in the State House at Jefferson City, employed there, you understand, in a very respectable though slightly subordinate capacity, a thing he was induced to consent to by the importunities of his numerous friends, and being there, you see—with great pleasure."

The last observation was addressed to Monsieur Crapolet, who had caught the Colonel's eye, and was going through certain pantomimics, intended in a delicate way to suggest to him, the Colonel, the propriety of taking some refreshment in the way of drink before proceeding with his narrative.

"It's no use," said Judge Smithers, hopelessly, as the Colonel accepted a generous quencher, "I see that I shall have to tell the story myself. Previous to Allen's acceptance of the office of clerk to the Secretary of State at Jefferson City, he held an equally subordinate office in the printing-house of the American Bald Eagle and Poor Devil's Advocate at St. Louis, namely that of items and bill collector. It has been suspected that the numerous little difficulties therein recorded of a certain gentleman well known in our

midst, were no other than the romantic doings of the Colonel himself about town. Under the inspiration of his pen the city became quite another place from what it ever was before, or ever will be again."

"Fact," murmured Allen, admiringly.

"But," continued the Judge, "it was in his capacity of bill collector, that the Colonel shone with especial brilliancy. Soon after the first of January it was the custom of the proprietors to send the Colonel forth——"

"From the Eden of the sanctum," observed Allen, parenthetically.

"To meet the smiles and frowns of a heartless world—armed with a pile of bills, a description of weapon not usually of much avail in captivating the affections of men. Now, whatever was the result of these adventurous sallies to the aforesaid proprietors, one thing is certain, that the Colonel fattened upon them. The fact is when he didn't get money, he got a drink—and not unfrequently got very drunk."

"He's cool," said Allen, who happened at the time to be hob-nobbing with Monsieur Craiolet, and whose complexion did not bespeak any great degree of coolness in his corporeal system at all events.

"To relinquish a post like this," continued the Judge, "went sorely against the Colonel's grain. But, however, he did it."

"He did it," groaned Allen.

"In his new situation he didn't get many punches."

"Meaning the mixture—so called," interpreted Allen.

"And yet strange to say, this abstemious course of life did not seem to agree with the Colonel's constitution, for during his continuance at the State House he was troubled with a periodical attack of fever, which was sure to befall him soon after the first of January."

"Always on the memorable eighth."

"And which made it invariably necessary for him to return home. It was a little curious how this fever affected him. He was quite thin and sick on leaving Jefferson City, looking in part as if he had dieted—and his enemies actually affirmed that such was the case—on rhubarb for a week previous. But when he came back after an absence of a few weeks only, he was robust and healthy-looking—not to say, red even in the face, as if he had during all this time lived upon nothing but brandy and water and hot punches, which his enemies likewise accused him of. For two years the secretary submitted to this misfortune of Allen's without a word of complaint."

"Parbleu!" observed Monsieur Crapolet, shrugging his shoulders, as much as to inquire what the dragon he could say.

"About the first of January of the third year, Allen's health began to fail again. He observed to the Secretary that he must go home, that he could not somehow support the climate of Jefferson City for a longer period than ten or eleven months. It was very strange, but there it was—

"'But,' suggested the Secretary, 'it is stranger still that you should always return, looking so well.'

"'The subscriber is exceedingly afraid this time that he'll never recover his health sufficiently to come back at all,' returned Allen.

"So when the eighth arrived, Allen having previously informed the Secretary that he had a presentiment that he should not live the night out if he remained over that day, took his departure for St. Louis. After he had been gone a week, the Secretary, 'smelling a rat' perhaps, thought he would send an embassy to inquire after his health and report progress. Well, they arrived—there were two of them—at Allen's hotel at St. Louis, and inquired how the Colonel was. The

barkeeper informed them that the individual in question was a leetle under the weather about dinner-time, but would not probably be sick enough to retire to bed before night.

"He is able to sit up, then, a portion of the day?" inquired they.

"Well, he stands it as long as he can," was the reply.

"We are from Jefferson City," said they, "and learnt of his sickness at that place."

"The Colonel is a case," was the somewhat figurative response."

"Ticket was the word," interposed Allen.

"Well, they finally asked if they could see him, and were requested, in reply, to hold on a bit, and they'd see and hear him, too, to their entire satisfaction. It was not long before our hero was set down at the door, and came in with the roll of the hack still upon him, shouting in a thick and sonorous tone of voice, that 'all the world was a stage-coach, and all the men, women, and band-boxes merely passengers therein.'"

"The Judge has got that part correct, any Low," said Allen with a wink.

"The embassy rubbed their eyes, but it was no ghost whom they beheld; neither did the man look sick, at least not according to the common acceptation of the word, so they ventured to call him by name. 'Ha!' said the Colonel, on recognising his old companions at Jefferson City, and little suspecting their errand, 'you have arrived at the very moment. I am to have a bit of a supper directly, with a few friends. You see I have been out all day on a collecting tour, and not having been very successful in filling my pockets with rocks, am not exactly in good ballast-trim. As William says:—

“What, not one hit
From Tripoli, from Mexico, and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks!”

“Here was a case for you!”

“Quite a subject for Hogarth,” said Allen.

“But to conclude. The embassy accepted the polite invitation; Allen, to give the devil his due—without any figure of speech—gave them a handsome repast. Towards the small hours, the Colonel was somehow got to bed; and the next morning our diplomats, completely won over to the enemy, were on their way back to Jefferson City.

“Well,” said the Secretary to them on their return, with a knowing look, ‘how did you find Allen;—pretty sick, eh?’

“He was indeed, said they, solemnly.

“Have a doctor?” inquired the Secretary.

“‘There were two physicians in attendance,’ replied the embassy (which was true, for among the Colonel’s guests were two knights of the lancet).

“‘Able to sit up?’ persisted the Secretary.

“‘Well, hardly,’ was the reply. ‘We left St. Louis at noon, and he had not been able to rise at that hour.’

“The Secretary appeared to be satisfied, and nothing further was said at the time. But the cream of the matter was, that the Secretary had slipped out to St. Louis, immediately after the departure of his friends, and had been present with them at the hotel in a kind of incog., and was of course aware of the entire transaction. The Dutch-uncleism of the Colonel, in rather avoiding a strictly veracious account of his sufferings, on his return to Jefferson City, was really delightful. The joke, however, was never fully acknowledged in public until on a certain

occasion, when our four characters happened to be indulging together, the Secretary, in an unguarded moment, observed to the barkeeper, that he would take a small dash of 'Typhoid' in his. An explanation followed, and the result was another supper at the Colonel's expense, where the subject was fully discussed, and pronounced highly discreditable to Missouri politics. Now, Allen, you rascal, don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

"I trust," said the Colonel, with a penitent air, "that the thing may be set down as among the foibles of youth, and on no account be allowed to go any further."

"Of course not!" said we all.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCENE AT PALENQUILLA.

IT is an old habit of mine—so old as to be almost a second nature—that of prying beneath the outer surface of things, after a concealed mystery; of getting, as it were, behind the scenes in every act of life that I thought particularly worthy of my attention, that I might learn something of the motives which led to such greatness or glitter; that I might weigh calmly these palpable results in my mind, and decide for myself how much was real, and how much false; how often the heart was in the action, or in the most melancholy and perverse opposition. And especially in visiting a new place, have I been wont to seek for something not written plainly on its front—something of its inner life, something characteristic of the spot, that should set its mark upon it in my memory, and make it unlike all other places to me; something which, when its name was mentioned, should instantly start up before me, the one bold figure of the picture, to which the surrounding objects should form a shadowy back-ground. But in this I have not always been successful. I have spent days in certain spots, watching long and wearily for a glimpse of that subtle revelation, as one sits sometimes beside a great painting, striving, oh, how vainly! to catch something of the inspiration of him who conceived and executed it, in the glow of which presence all its most delicate beauties should



start forth ; and yet have gone away, and not having felt and grown, as it were, with and into them, have soon forgotten them altogether. And at other times my nature has so mingled itself with the deep earnestness of the scene, that I never—never can forget it.

It was a stormy evening ; the rain fell in merciless torrents. Among the thick forests on the opposite bank it plunged with a heavy crashing sound. The yellow streams rushed in foaming impetuosity down the sloping hill-side of Palenquilla, and gave a fresh impulse to the already maddened current of the river. It was no easy task to keep a footing in the ascent leading to the hotel farthest from our barge, for while the wind did its best to overthrow you, the running water and the slippery soil under foot contributed equally to the difficulties of locomotion. Nevertheless, prompted by something which, for lack of a better term, you may call curiosity, I was bent on reaching that edifice ; and as sleep in our barge, owing to the social peculiarities of our neighbors, was out of the question, had quite made up my mind, if I did succeed in reaching it, to pass the night there. Sleep—yes, to court that—not rest, but sleep—was to be the end of my toilsome journey, as I thought. Sleep—I did not find it there, but there was one who did ; one who closed his little eyes for ever on the weary world that night, and was with the angels when he awoke.

Ugh ! I have stumbled over something, but 'tis nothing but a pig : it might have been something worse ; yes, and it might have been something a good deal better, a log for instance, and then its squealing wouldn't have awakened such a deafening chorus from the dogs, who ought to keep perfectly quiet or be simply whining on a night like this. And ugh ! again, for mishaps never come singly ; it is my head I have hit this time, against a beam lying on the top

of posts, which may be part of the skeleton of an awning to some building which was to have been erected, for all that I ever found out to the contrary. Those big lanterns are not such ridiculous affairs after all. But here we are—this is the hotel.

Somehow, it is not a hotel suggestive of a cosy night. There is, so to speak, a lack of those substantial, home-like, thoroughly comfortable features which are associated in our minds with the idea of a model hotel. There is no great wide door, opening into a broad well-lighted hall, with a winding staircase leading to other stories, where are snug chambers with the anthracite throwing a kindly glow upon the soft carpet, and neat furniture, and snowy counterpane of the bed. There is no parlor where the ladies have assembled for a hop; no other parlor where grey-headed men sit gazing at the coal fire, with the morning or evening newspaper upon their knees, and indulge in reminiscences of the last war; observing that when the news of peace arrived it was a sloppy night, very much such a night as this, in fact. There is no snuggery known as the bar-room, reeking with odors of tobacco, lemon peel, and fragrant old Jamaica, where young men in plaid trowsers, many-pocketed coats, flat-brimmed hats, and neckcloths with square ends, sit and smoke and drink, and smoke and drink again. There is no full-fed, ruddy-visaged landlord, whom you soon get to know by the familiar name of "old Peter," to bid you welcome with as much cordiality, and order John's attention to your luggage with as much satisfaction, as if he had been expecting you for a month, and felt really very much relieved that you had at last arrived. But then it is such a hotel as one would expect, knowing that it was originally a native ranche, and that the main building, wings, and similar extensive additions which were to have been made to it,

were not yet begun. It has one room, which must be some twelve feet square, lighted by a tallow candle on the usual board, a notched pole leading to the attic, the customary furniture in the way of boxes and logs, a ground floor it is true, but only partially appropriated by the puddles. It seems to be taking care of itself, for no one takes any notice of me as I enter, and indeed there is no one inside to do so; and to get in at all I am obliged to remove the arm of a gentleman who is barricading the door, and who is very sallow, thin, and shaky, but habited in white pantaloons and a black dress coat, and looking like a man who had put on the last remnants of his bravery to die. I observed jovially to this gentleman that it is great weather, and think that I made an allusion to "young ducks" in the same connexion; but he is past taking any notice of such trifling, or of anything else as to that, although he afterwards turns out to be the proprietor of the place. When this truth comes home to me, I propose taking a glass of brandy and water. He answers me, "There's brandy," without making any sign to show where, or indeed looking in any direction at all, so that I am under the necessity of hunting it up myself. The ring of the dime upon the board in payment is equally powerless to arouse him,—from what? perhaps from a vision of scenes and faces far enough away. I next propose, but this time to myself, retiring for the night, and, scraping the mud from my boots as far as practicable, and assuring myself of the steadiness of the stick in advance, take my way to the attic.

I must have been very tired and sleepy, for I can only recollect one moment when the cracking of the cane floor beneath my step chimed in beautifully with the pattering of the heavy rain-drops on the roof, and I think slumber seized me even as I settled down upon my primitive couch. I had

hardly lost myself, as the expression is, when I was again roused to consciousness by voices in the apartment below. The first was that of a woman, low and shrill, impressing me as coming from a heart in bitterest warfare with its destiny, and curiously at variance with the lulling sound of the rain, and the dull, heavy, mournful gustiness of the wind.

"Oh, John," it cried in tones of agony, "do not let him die, he is my little angel! John, oh, I cannot let him die!"

"Hush, dear," said another voice, the rough hard voice of a man; "why should we ask to have him spared? Has our life been so very pleasant that we should pray for a like boon for *him*?"

The words, and the tone in which they were uttered more than the words themselves, revealed to me a picture, suddenly illuminated as it were by a flash of Heaven's lightning, in which I noted all the details of one of those unhappy lives so commonly led by the sensitive and poor. It was with no hope of turning back the tide of hurrying events, and yet certainly with no idle curiosity, that I crept along over the cane floor of my chamber towards the aperture, where I could leisurely inspect the scene below. Oh, what would I not have given for the power and appliances of the painter, to have stamped its lineaments upon the canvas, even as I saw them there! A man and woman had entered, and were seated side by side on two rude boxes, stationed in a corner of the apartment, which was possibly the most comfortable locale, if such an epithet may be applied to premises so utterly wet and cheerless. These two persons seemed in full possession of the house. The proprietor had either gone out, or was coiled away to sleep in some corner hidden to my view. A second glance revealed a third person, a child of apparently not more than five or six summers, whose

emaciated and spasmodic frame was almost wholly concealed by the protecting arms of the man, evidently his father. This group of three was so disposed, with the feeble candle-light falling full upon them, that, in my desire to read their story in their faces, I almost immediately saw their each minutest line, while all the world beside became nothing but the blackest void, and my ear ceased to take note of the rain and gusty wind, and heard nothing but the outpourings of these forlorn and seemingly forgotten spirits.

The man was apparently rather under what is termed the middle age, of small stature, wasted and thin, as if from long care and self-denial. His attire, even in the abandon of that out-of-the-way spot, somehow bespoke the gentleman, and just as plainly, too, the *poor* gentleman. As he sat holding his frail burden, every moment, alas! becoming frailer, vainly trying to soothe it to a moment's repose, and after each unsuccessful effort turning his beseeching eyes to heaven, I could read in his sharp pale face, his high projecting, but not broad forehead, his quick restless eye, flashing with a certain fire withal, and the unsteady working of his mouth, the plainly written story of a high-hearted disappointed man. There was something in his whole demeanor which bespoke the man of pride, of principle, of genius too, but also of irresolution—the most unhappy type of all God's images on earth; the man who, seeing the prizes with which life's lottery is teeming, and knowing the way to reach them, yet lacks the nerve to follow therein, because the cowardly doubt is still there, as to whether, after all, the highest good is thus to be obtained.

The woman, like the man, in one respect at least, was "not now that which she had been," and yet there were traces of her former better self flickering occasionally in her face and mien. Although no smile played upon her lips, which

were once beautiful, but were now thin and drawn tightly together, as if to shut out from her heart the atmosphere of a world that had never seemed to love her, and no especial brilliance flashed upon you when the lids were raised from eyes around which were drawn dark lines, and which stood out in painful prominence from wasted cheeks ; and although her costume was of the simplest, suggestive of a dull routine of daily tasks, and nothing of the dashiness and bravery of life, yet there was something, not exactly visible to the outward eye, which showed that this was not the destiny to which she was born ; else why should I have seen her, as in the mirror of the past, sweeping with gallant grace adown a gilded drawing-room, or rousing to wild gaiety a sea-shore or hearth-side party, by looks and tones fraught with fire-like electric sparks ? Even now, in that worn, slender, compressed frame, there was secreted a possibility of fascination, which needed only the showers and beams of sympathizing hearts to awaken to active being. Ye rude ones of the world, ye who take pride in the scrupulous correctness of your dealings in your business relations with other men, paying promptly your pecuniary debts even to the uttermost farthing, but who, in the calculating and unfeeling pursuit of your selfish ends, jostle the pure, the gentle, and the uncomplaining from *their* paths of life, depriving them thus of those simple pleasures which you know not of, because you cannot enjoy them ; think you that you will never be called to a reckoning for this ?

And the little child, who was overleaping all this weariness and misery of life, and was soon to be a little cherub—I actually found myself chuckling over the idea that he was cheating the old deceptive villain of a world, and was eluding its clutches even by a stolen march to heaven. No frittering away of the beauty and glory of *his* young life by

unmanly, cankering cares. The lustre of his roguish little eye was not to be dimmed, the rosy fulness of his mischievous mouth was not to be wholly wasted, his laughing curls were not even to be cut, till he had lain them all in the bosom of the rotting earth which was their mother. I have said that he was a child of some five or six summers. There was none of the frostiness of winter about him; nothing even in his form, worn by disease, suggestive of cold or barrenness. He was a delicate summer flower, and now that he was being crushed to earth, it was a summer storm that did it; a rude gale, that might break his fragile stalk, and scatter far and wide his fair frail petals, but which would none the less certainly waft the essence of his fragrance and loveliness far beyond the clouds.

The father sat with the child in his arms, not with any hope of keeping him from the grasp of death, but gently rocking him, as if trying to lull him off to slumber, as he had often perchance done after frolicsome days, when sleep came with a soft and welcome tread, bringing pleasant dreams and angel-whispers in her train. Then the sweet vision of the morrow awakening danced before the father's brain, and *now*——

The mother sat by his side, with her hands clenched, firmly knit together. She was trying to feel physically the agony of sitting helpless there, while her child died. She could not bring herself to feel it, and so she kept rising up, looking wildly round, but, seeing no succor in any quarter, would settle into her seat again with an agonizing groan.

"Oh, John," she would gasp out at times, "tell me, will he live, will he be better soon, will he know his dear mother again? God forgive me, but I cannot—oh no, indeed, I cannot let him die!"

And then again :

"Oh, why is it, why *must* it be so? When we left everything else, and our other children behind us, we could not leave little Charlie. He was to have been our good angel, to make every hardship light and pleasant. Tell me, John, if there is any meaning in this blow."

"It is the penalty we pay for being poor," answered the man bitterly.

A dark shadow, as of remorse, settled suddenly down upon the woman's brow, as she continued wildly:

"But I thought it was enough when we buried little Arthur; you said God had taken him, and it was better for him and us. But Charlie, he has been longer with us, and he is different from all the others; we can never love anything again as we have loved him. Oh, see him now; see his little limbs how they twine. O God, do not let him suffer thus! take him, if thou must, but do not let him linger thus!"

And the father answered solemnly, while the child's limbs were stiff and bent in a last convulsion, and the old look of life was fading away in his upturned eyes, and great drops of agonizing sweat stood upon his little brow, and while greater drops came upon the father's face—a face whose every line spoke a voiceless prayer to God to shorten the death struggle—thus he answered:

"Yes, Mary, this suffering is very hard, almost *too* hard; but hear me, Mary, and thank God with me that our Charlie shall never know a suffering ten thousand times greater than this, which you and I could not have seen and felt for!"

"He does not suffer," said another voice close by. "Even now, your child Charlie rejoices with the angels in the paradise of God."

As the voice spoke, the painful gurgling ceased in the

child's throat, his limbs gradually straightened and resumed their native grace, while a lovely radiance illumined his beautiful countenance, as if it had caught a reflex from the happy spirit hovering there a short moment to bid adieu to its late tenement of clay. A peaceful, easy drawing of a breath or two, and the last chapter of this little life on earth was closed.

There was silence for some minutes. The rain was over, the winds were at rest, and a broad square of moonlight came in through the doorway of the ranche, lighting up the spot where sat the figures of the scene.

It was only natural that the last comer should have been Arthur Orrington. It was particularly fitting that he should have come at that moment—I had no curious sensation how or whence—to form as it were a connecting, reconciling link between those afflicted spirits and the higher order of existences, of which their child was now one. And when, taking a hand of each within his own, he knelt before them in prayer, I could not help feeling indeed that something of the spirit of Him who, coming down from heaven, took upon himself the likeness even of us, and “went about doing good,” yet lingered in the form of our humanity.

His prayer was no idle expenditure of words. It rose up from his soul like spiritual incense: and as it ascended, a like incense from other souls mingled and rose with it, an acceptable offering at the throne of the All-perfect. Oh, what an odor of tearful joy, and gratitude, and hope seemed to float upward and outward from our hearts, making the atmosphere about us redolent of all pleasant things, when that clear, soft, solemn voice repeated the words of our Saviour, “Suffer little children to come unto me;” and then the ineffable peace and faith which overcame us, how can I describe it, when there followed the blessed assurance, that

"of such was the kingdom of heaven!" But when, for the first time, the absolute certainty of their child's eternal bliss broke upon the parents' brain; when, following the spirit of the prayer, they saw him sitting with the white-robed cherubs at the feet of Christ, and knew that there should be his home for ever, the measure of their thankfulness was full. The great glory of the thought, that while they were going about in quest of the treasures of earth, other hands than those of men had been gathering treasures for them, worth more than all the worlds of space, and laying them up in those regions "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal," was enough. The corpse of the child lying in its last composure, as if fanned to slumber by an angel's wing, was but typical of the perfect peace and gladness of those two spirits bowed and silent in the presence of that sublime revelation.

It was long after the departure of Arthur Orrington, ere a word was spoken on either side. The man and woman sat in their respective seats, almost motionless, while the former still held in his arms his still precious burden. At length a loud, long sob burst from the woman, and as she turned her face full towards me, catching meanwhile upon her husband's arm, I saw lines of tears streaming down her cheek.

"John," said she, in a tone most thrillingly sad, yet earnest, "I feel that I have done a great wrong, but God has forgiven me; can you forgive me also?"

The man changed not his posture in the slightest, and she continued:

"When you were in trouble, John, when the world grew dark around you, when you hadn't a friend, John, because you hadn't money, but when a little money would have made you free and happy, I had it and kept it back from you."

The man turned upon her a countenance full of emotion, but in which was no sentiment of anger.

"Yes, John, I had money, money inherited from a relative, that you did not know of—and I kept it back. But oh!—believe me, I did not keep it from avarice or mistrust; I kept it because I would have been too wise, and was a fool."

In the man's countenance was an expression of earnest, searching inquiry, which the woman interpreting, went on:

"Yes, John, I saw you suffer day by day; I saw your sensitive spirit goaded and made miserable; I saw you despised by mean, unworthy men, and I kept back the money which might have made you independent of them all. But oh! John, I did not keep it back for myself, I kept it back for *him*; yes, for *him*, that I might have it to keep off the evil of his dark day. Oh! I thought it would come as yours had come, when he was a handsome, high-hearted young man, and I could not bear to think of him crushed and disappointed, and despised of his companions. So I said, I will save it for him, and when his dark day comes, and he shall say to me, 'Mother, I have no friends, and no position in the world, and I must die,' then I would bring it forth and give it to him, and be repaid by his kisses and his tears for all that you and I have suffered. Oh, what a fool I was!"

The woman's tears fell in gushing rivers, but her sobs were less wild and violent. The man wept too, but calmly; and taking her by the hand, he said, in a voice so touchingly tender and sad that I found my own tears falling likewise:

"You are my own dearest Mary. I love you better, ten thousand times better than ever. Let us thank God together that Charlie's dark day has come and gone; he will

never, never see another, never another shadow through all eternity !”

“But, John, it was wrong to let you suffer as I did, and wrong to wish to thwart the providence of God, and keep my idol from his share of the world’s sorrow. Let us try to understand this lesson. Let us go back to those who are left to us. We shall have enough to begin life with somewhere, and we will live-together, all of us. There is certainly a place for us somewhere in the world, and no matter how humbly we live. It seems to me that there cannot be any poverty or hardship left, now Charlie is dead. Dear Charlie, he left us nothing but his dear, sweet memory, and yet how rich are we in the love which he has already sent down to us from heaven ! Let us go back, John, to where our home was, and not care for such wealth as gold any more.”

“Be it so,” said the man ; and he bowed his head and imprinted a passionate kiss upon the pale forehead of his dead child, as if the little one, whose every word and act had been lovely and endearing during life, had taught a yet lovelier lesson by his death.

Afterwards, when a native woman came in, and, removing the corpse tenderly from the father’s arms, laid it upon the counter, and proceeded to wash its face and smoothe down its tumbled locks, but did not remove its clothes, for the mother by signs and looks forbade, thus leading me to think that it was a favorite suit, perchance the very one which he wore to church, hand in hand with his proud parents—proud of *him*—humble enough in so much else—on the last Sabbath of their sojourn in their native land—the fact of her appearance, I say, was somehow associated in my mind with the idea of Arthur Orrington, as if he had sent her to do this. Calmly as she performed her delicate task, and tearlessly as, having prepared the body even for burial, she

threw over it a fragment of a cotton robe bound with a deep fringe of elaborately-wrought lace, and then taking from a box upon the floor two tallow candles, and lighting them placed them at its head and feet, it required no subtle powers of penetration to see that she worked not for hire, unless indeed payment was to be taken in looks of heart-gushing gratitude and love. What mattered it that she was black, and that her features were not as delicately carved as those about her? In the dusky shadow of the Great Reaper's presence, forms and colors were alike, and God, who seeth deeper than these, knows if at that moment her spirit likewise was not pure and white as theirs.

I left my chamber noiselessly, and crept out unseen. The day was just beginning to break. It was a fresh, clear, breezy morning. As I slid along downward toward the beach, merry shouts came rolling up to greet me, and when I arrived among them, all was activity and bustle. The "poco tiempo" principle of the natives was for the time ignored by the resolute gold-seekers, determined to get on. Our matin hymn was "Wake up there," "Go ahead," "Clear the kitchen," and it rose to the melodious accompaniment of tin pans and portable cooking-stoves. Each was striving to be off first, and not a little gouging was going on in consequence, mingled with hard words and some unimportant skirmishes. Nevertheless, the scene was pleasant and enlivening, so suggestive as it was of cheery life and health and hope.

But I could not keep my thoughts from recurring sometimes to the bereaved couple whom I had left in the ranche upon the hill. In imagination I saw them fulfilling their last duties towards the precious remains of their darling babe, putting them beneath the ground, hiding them from

their sight for ever, and then, with faces turned homeward, going in quite another way from the rest of us, down the windings of that melancholy river alone.

Alone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

GORGONA.

WE were well away from Palenquilla before sunrise. The crisp, cool air of the morning came winnowing over the river, its limitless wings dispersing fresh odors at every beat. Seated beneath our awning of palm leaves, having completed our ablutions in the stream beside us, and sipping the tiny cups of strong coffee, which Thom, in his bountiful providence, had prepared for us; nothing could be more delightful than to feel ourselves thus gratefully borne onward towards our journey's end. So pleasant was the sense of overcoming the strong current of the river, so soothing its gurgling music as I hurried past, so refreshing the sweet scent from odorous woodlands on either hand, so majestic and beautifully solemn the view of palm, acacia, and thick-leaved mango, dark shadowing, and seemingly impenetrable at their base, with manifold bushes, creeping parasitical plants, and great bunches of old spongy moss, enlivened only in spots by scarlet or yellow blossoms, peeping forth like eyes of flame set deep into the front of huge, shaggy, slumberous behemoths of the wood, but with the golden sunshine just throwing a playful flicker over their topmost boughs, and making their wavy outlines so radiant up there against the clear blue sky!

The glorious sunshine of the tropics—how my soul hankers after it here in my winterly New England home!

"The cold and cloudy clime
Where I was born, but where I would not die"—

(for the present at all events). There is no other sunshine in the world like unto it. There may be, perhaps, a faint likeness in our early summer days, when there is wafted far from the sweet south, a softly mellow atmosphere through which it falls lovingly upon us from the cloudless heaven, broken into waves of light by a golden shimmer drifting through it, but oh, how faint at best! And again in the autumn, the Indian summer, there is an attempt to revive it.

"When come the warm bright days,
As still such days will come,
To call the squirrel and the bee
From out their winter home."

But oh, how faint again—and comparatively speaking, ghastly in its surroundings of dead leaves and naked meadows, and how wanting in that depth and fulness which make the presence of this so dimly but so wholly satisfying!

But while we are bestowing ourselves thus happily—and so far silently, with the exception of Monsieur Crapolet, who is constantly performing soles upon his nasal organ, by way of putting an additional edge upon the olfactory nerve—it is quite otherwise with our boatmen. They, brave fellows that they are, have now come to "the hard part of the river," as they term it. And hard indeed it is for them, where in shallow places and at sharp bends the stream fairly whistles as it spouts by in headlong speed. They ply themselves to their task nevertheless, with unconquerable determination. They have laid aside their shirts, and now, attired simply in trowsers and sombrero, throw themselves bodily upon their bending poles, while the perspiration comes smoking from their deep chests, as they step steadily from stem to stern of

the struggling boat. The native boatmen in the other boats, which are constantly passing and repassing, sometimes getting aground in the bit of channel right ahead, and sometimes bumping up against us, with innumerable "carahos" on their side, and about an equal quantity of sturdy oaths in the vernacular on the part of our men—not having, I am sorry to say, an equal sense of what is demanded by the conventionalities of civilized life, go to yet greater lengths in disrobing themselves, and "so far as the curved line is the line of beauty," are certainly none the homelier for the arrangement. The imperturbable sang-froid with which they attend to this little item of personal accommodation, and the renewed satisfaction with which they return to their task, is quite a sight to behold. Then the horror or disguised merriment of the ladies, when there happen to be any in the same boat; or the look of comic perplexity with which the boatmen sometimes again encase their nether limbs when prevailed upon to do so by a liberal offer of *aguardente* or *eau-de-vie* from the gentlemen in attendance; it is really quite a commentary upon the morality of our social customs, and might furnish the text for a very respectable homily. *Aguardente* may or may not be a decent kind of beverage in its way, but for a Chagres native to expose his person in unadorned development, save for a ragged girdle about the loins, and that too in presence of eyes unused to the contemplation of naked beauties, though perchance not unfamiliar with the lorgnette at the Broadway or the Astor Place—preposterous! One's ideas of decency—you know.

And speaking of lorgnettes, imagine the narrator, backed up into a snug corner of the stern sheets of our barge, as if it were a corner box, and gazing through his visual organs, quickened in their powers by a concentration of purpose as by a lorgnette, at the performances in our little theatre

beneath the awning. It is quite curious to watch the play of characters upon the stage of my inspection.

There is Judge Smithers, for instance, tall, square-framed, large-featured, rollicking in good sense, the type of the frank, shrewd, honest, adventurous, successful American. It is a little remarkable that the judge should have taken such a fancy to the rowdy, dilapidated Colonel; yet they seem very much pleased with each other. The Judge, as I conceive, regards the Colonel as a fancy specimen of locomotive nature, and takes delight in trotting him out, and exhibiting him points to admiring spectators; and the Colonel, on his part, looks upon the Judge as a capital fellow, in his way, and makes quite a pet of him, as being exactly the sort of man he might have been, had he thought it worth his while to lay himself out, which, indeed, is quite natural, since it is, doubtless, within the experience of all, that we are apt to respect ourselves more for what we might have been than for what we really are. The Judge is a worker and dealer in the realities of life, and his career harmonizes with his ideas. The Colonel has a pleasant theory, that life consists of a series of pictures on the brain, and that the great thing is to keep that portion of the system in a soft and mellow state, that these may be imprinted with due effect; and this desirable result he has a trick of producing by frequent potations. The Judge has the handsome freshness of early manhood still upon him. The Colonel retains but little of his pristine beauty, and if it is not all turned to ashes, it is because the fire is still burning; but the ashes will come nevertheless.

Monsieur Crapolet, too—such a trump as he turned out to be, as a merry and thoroughly serviceable *compagnon de voyage*; one up to the rare trick of turning melancholy into a burlesque; he was the very ace of trumps; there was a

golden vein of childishness running through his manly character which the mere opulence of outward circumstances would have made look pale and mean; and this was the great charm about him, that just in proportion as he was poor, and weak, and utterly devoid of binding attachments to the world, he was rich, and strong, and joyous in the native resources of his genial temperament. He did not seem to have any particular thing to live for but the enjoyment of life itself. He impressed me as a man who had, as it were, ceased to recognise any high spiritual ends worth struggling for, and had given himself wholly up to the illustration of the glories and perfection of the physical. What he might have become had he married Virginie or *bien* Mathilde, encircled by certain conventional responsibilities, as he would consequently have been, I cannot say—certainly not the plump and perfect Monsieur Crapolet of the Isthmus. He would have been worth a fortune to the proprietor of a cheap eating-house in Yankee-land, to have merely stood, picking his teeth daily at his door, thus representing the general condition of the man who eat at his place, in contradistinction to nine out of ten of the passers-by, who were supposed to eat elsewhere; Sardanapalus would have gloried in him as a subject, so beautifully unconscious as was his elastic form of “the weight of human misery;” but had he been in the place of that humane and voluptuous monarch, I think he would have gone farther, and not content with seeing his people “glide ungroaning to the tomb,” would, in the technical language of the day, have sent them “smiling” to their latter homes. If Monsieur Crapolet had a principle or theory in the world, it was that we all owed a tremendous debt to nature, and that it would have been a grievous sin to have turned our backs upon the more generous kinds of nourishment which she daily offered us; and this was

exemplified every hour of his life, by his conscientious selection and consumption of the richest and most invigorating of her juices, within the limits of his observation and means. So fully satisfied was he of the correctness of his favorite theory, that if any one had catechised him as to the whole duty of man, he would, doubtless, have responded, "liquidate;" and if he ever had occasion to sign his name, I feel morally certain that it would have read, as we often see signatures of mercantile houses in the London and Paris newspapers—"François Crapolet en liquidation."

We are all of us dreamers. Were it not for dreams, life would not be supportable; and Monsieur Crapolet had his dream—it was a darling day-dream. He had nursed and played with it so long and often, that at times he looked upon it as a reality—a dream of great wealth, that was one day to be his. He had very vague notions, if any, as to where this property was to come from, or how it was to come; but the amount was settled—"sept milliards"—and nothing remained but to lay it out in such a way as to get the greatest possible amount of enjoyment from it. It was a real treat the way this gentleman and Colonel Allen used to get hobnobbing together, while discussing this expectancy; the touching way in which the Colonel used to express a hope that it might come soon—"when," as he was fond of adding, "we will have some better liquor than this, Monsieur Crapolet;" and the calm, philosophic manner in which Monsieur Crapolet was wont to reply, with a shrug, "Parbleu;" thereby annihilating, at one blow, all doubts on that score, and concluding with an observation to the effect that the liquor was, however, very passable "*en attendant*." It would have been perhaps rather melancholy to have seen these two full-grown hombies (as Judge Smithers styled them) thus disporting with the world's serious things, but for a convic-

tion in my own mind that every man's existence is spent "*en attendant*" something, and that without some great life-long hope to buoy us up, we should hardly have strength to buffet the rude waves of life.

Tom, by way of presenting Thom to us in a new light, has taught this whilom taciturn individual to shout "*Caraho*," at a given signal, in the most approved style of native oratory. Tom sits across the boat's bow, with his feet dangling in the stream, smoking his pipe; and whenever a boat manned by natives passes us, either in ascending or descending the river, Tom gives the signal, and thereupon Thom shouts "*Caraho*" at the top of his lungs, which is answered by a deafening yell of "*carahoes*" from the aforesaid natives, filling the whole heavens with a horrible discord, so that even the sleepy alligators on the river's bank are fain to slide down under its surface, to escape the dreadful din. Tom explains this as "fun!"

But I think, on the whole, that the Judge is our most entertaining companion. In those graces of conversation which may be termed anecdotal, the Judge excels. His scenes are laid principally in Mexico and California, countries with which the Major is likewise familiar. I would like to introduce to the reader some of the Judge's stories, though I cannot vouch for his finding them as interesting as I did at the time; but I feel that it would be inconsistent with the plan of this narrative to do so here. If I have lingered thus long with our old friends, it is that we are now coming upon a new phase of Isthmus life. We are about to plunge, as it were, into the middle of the rush and tide thereof, and these our fellow-voyagers thus far will come up to our notice less frequently, and be seen less closely than heretofore.

It was past noon when we arrived at the little cluster of huts known as San Pablo. Here we were to dine. There

was a crowd of boats in before us, and the old padre's ranche upon the hill was completely besieged by the first comers; not that there was anything especially inviting in the nature of the refreshments for sale within, but from a kind of loafing habit, into which they had all more or less fallen, of patronizing every ranche along the river. The fact of their having paid a dime for a small cup of weak, muddy coffee, or a tiny glass of rum and turpentine, gave them the character of injured persons in their own eyes, and warranted their prowling moodily about the premises, pocketing an egg or two, if there happened to be any "lying round loose," or breaking through the picket fences, in agricultural explorations.

The padre was not at home, but his wife was—a formidable old lady, with a square, bony, masculine frame, and an immensely befrizzled head of hair, into which she occasionally stuck her lighted cigar, in the intervals of smoking. She was quite cool and business-like amidst all the rush of custom, serving out liquor and coffee with the air of a person who had a sacred duty to perform. She had two attendants, one of whom, a draggle-tailed, overgrown little girl, in a dirty white dress, washed the coffee cups by passing them through a tub of brown colored water upon the counter. Her face and hands (be it observed *en passant*) bore unmistakable traces of having been washed in the same liquid. The other attendant was a boy in shirt and sombrero, who made periodical visits to a neighboring hut in search of more coffee. This young gentleman was enough of a practical philosopher to believe in the motto, that he is rich whose wants are few, and returned a very decided "No" to propositions on various sides to take him along.

There was another personage in the padre's abode, who was not "one of us." This was a Spaniard, or Spanish

Creole of the Isthmus. He was a thin, wiry-built fellow, very dark and sallow, with black eyes and hair, and the never-failing moustache, habited in white pants, with long spur-mounted boots outside, a gay red and black striped poncho, with a red silk sash about his waist, and a neat, narrow-brimmed Panama hat upon his head. This picturesque individual lay smoking with a kind of Alexander Selkirk air, in the one sole hammock of the apartment. The coffee-bearer informed us that he was from Panama, and had come across since sunrise; and furthermore showed us his mule attached to the picket inclosing a plantain patch in the rear of the hut. This information gave us all a thrill of pleasure. We had reached that point in the Isthmus where the land route was practicable for mules at all events. The great weariness of our journey was over. "The day of our longing" was at hand, when we would test the capabilities of our favorite animals. We were really within a few hours' jaunt of Panama. In imagination we saw the broad surface of the Pacific, dotted with numberless green isles, lying still and golden beneath a softer sunlight, yet heaving inwardly with deep yearnings, drawing us thitherward. There was something in the scene about us suggestive of the same thing. The village of San Pablo is founded on a broad cleared plain, with here and there a few clumps of acacias and sycamores, throwing their grateful shadows on the green. Cropping the short herbage of this table-land, were cows, bullocks, goats, and sheep. It was a quiet, patriarchal-looking spot, midway on the Isthmus. The Chagres river, which makes a sudden turn at this point, was shooting madly towards the ocean in our rear, while immediately beneath us it was comparatively calm as an inland lake. Beyond the turning there was a precipitous gravel bank, which looked as if the river had at some time leaped up against it,

and torn the shrubs and verdure from its front. Above us, in the direction where our course lay, was a harmonious outline of tree and creeping vine, and pebbly beach, with the towering peak of Carabali, from whose topmost foothold it is said the Atlantic and Pacific may be seen at once, thrown up like a great drift of living vegetation to mark the spot where the winds of two oceans met in battle. But over all the landscape on the western hand, the unclouded rays of the sun were falling, illuminating the picture with a brightness that was typical of the golden treasures beneath the surface of that wondrous coast; while in the other direction, black festoons of clouds shut out the blue sky, and the vista of hill, and plain, and river, was hidden in storm and mist.

Dinner over—dinner!—some stale biscuit, tough dry cheese, purchased of the padre's wife, and raw slices of ham; think of that, ye habitués of Parker's and Delmonico's!—we again took up our line of travel. Judge Smithers, Colonel Allen, and Tom joined a party who were going to walk into Gorgona, and the rest of us returned to our barge. As we threaded the windings of the river, it hourly became more clearly evident that we were approaching the Pacific side; the air had become more dry and pure; clean grassy hills rose at intervals up from the river's bank, dotted with picturesque haciendas, fields of corn, rice, and plantains, and groups of domestic animals; sometimes we struggled past a wholesome sandy beach, where some sapient-visaged cows and flirty little horses would stand looking curiously at us, and where there would likewise be some native women washing and spreading out their white dresses on the sand to dry. But these were merely suggestive specks of civilization. The genius of uncontrolled vegetation was far from being entirely put down, and many a long sweep in the

river disclosed only a frowning and impenetrable hedge of forest on either side. Black wooden crosses, occasionally seen in the more open spots, where lay the remains of those who "by the way side fell and perished," hinted also that danger from disease was still dogging us like a cold unwelcome shadow.

The Major, missing the excitement of the Judge's reminiscences, suggestive as they had been of similar personal adventures of his own, and feeling, too, impressed with an awful sense of his responsibility, now that the camels were so soon to be put upon their pegs, was unusually silent and meditative. And Monsieur Crapolet, suffering from a like bereavement of his dear friend, Colonel Allen, was disposed to be altogether retrospective in his fancies, and pertinaciously edified as to what a distinguished and useful member of society he would have been had he been fortunate enough to marry "*Virginie, ou bien Mathilde.*" And whether it was owing entirely to this somniferous state of things, or in part to my having watched the whole of the preceding night; one thing is certain, that I soon fell into a sound dreamless slumber.

A roar and buzz of confused noises, jabbering of natives, shouts and singing on the part of more pretentious individuals, neighing of horses, lamentations of mules, barking of dogs, with a faint shade of melody as from banjo and tamborine, drifting through it all, awakens me. Our boat has come to a sudden stop in the midst of a hundred other boats. A long low sandy beach on my right, checkered with piles of luggage, prostrate forms, miners' tents, under-sized shingle palaces, and native huts; a steep embankment rising from it, adorned with similar styles of architecture on a somewhat larger scale; a thousand lights moving and glimmering everywhere—a promiscuous mass of animal life, brute and

human, swarming over the whole; on the other hand the deep dark silent woods, skirting the sluggish water of the stream on which we ride—all this, dimly lighted by the just rising moon, is the vision upon which my eyes open—and this is Gorgona.

Here comes a man with a bull's-eye lantern in his hand, striding across the boats which intervene between us and the shore, in the direction of our own.

"Seven sleepers ahoy!" shouts a well known voice.

"Hulloa, Tom! that you?"

"Hulloa, yourself—where have you been to this Dutch month?" responds Tom.

"Well, really—I—I rather think we have been aground, somewhere below here—Is it very late?"

"Low tide in the demijohn!" suggests Tom, turning his light upon the still sleeping form of Monsieur Crapolet.

Tom stoops over the boat's side, and drawing a calabash of water proceeds very tenderly to bathe Monsieur Crapolet's wrists and temples, and speedily brings that gentleman to a knowledge of his whereabouts. Monsieur Crapolet's first inquiry is for Thom, and his second is of Thom as to whether "there is anything left."

"But, Tom, where is the Major and our boatmen?" I inquired.

Tom replies, that they are below, assisting in landing the camels; that the Major and Judge Smithers propose stopping in the tents with our Moors till morning; and, as he assures us that it is some distance below, and that everything is going on right there, we follow his advice, and, leaving Thom to look out for our effects in the boat, take our very uncertain way on shore; not, however, before Tom has made glad the heart of Monsieur Crapolet, by producing a small flask of

what he, Tom, styles the veritable Otard, Dupuy & Co., from which we each take "a moderate quencher."

Tom is full of talk. Oh, he has been here full six hours—was in before sunset, in fact. Met with innumerable adventures on the road—got lost—saw a big snake—danced two fandangoes—helped to bury a native—shot a monkey—found a little pig—didn't belong to anybody, so brought him along—had him cooked for supper at the hotel—great times up at the hotel—Miller's railroad house—liquor rather so-so, but first-rate cigars—grand ball at the Alcalde's—all the aristocracy present—a party of Ethiopian serenaders at Miller's, assisted by a French girl, styled in the bills "~~Mademoiselle~~ Adele, la Rossignol Française." So Tom rattles on pell-mell, leading one to surmise that Otard, Dupuy & Co. are the glasses through which everything appears so charming to him.

"But the greatest thing," adds Tom, "is, that one of our old college friends is here. Now, Warrenner, who do you think it is?"

"Can't say, really."

"Why, Jack Tabor—brought up here—still seeking his fortune, after having been round the world two or three times since he ran away from Cambridge. What a wild devil Jack was—eh? Jack Tabor—old Quin. Oh, dear me!"

"You don't mean to say that Jack is in business here?"

"But I do," continued Tom; "and here is his house"—pausing in front of one of the more unpretending palaces, festooned above the door of which was what at first sight appeared to be a stout bit of rope, or a double-headed snake, but which we afterwards found to be an animal appendage significant of the name of the hotel—to wit, the "Mule's Tail."

A conversation of a bargaining character was going on

within. "Come," said a deep, powerful voice, which we instantly recognised as that of Tabor, "what do you say? Will you join us? We need three to do the business right. You can't do better—you know you're only a poor ragamuffin now. Here, take the pipe, and call the thing closed."

"The subscriber," replied a husky, tremulous voice, "don't need to be reminded of his poverty; although he may say that he has expectations, through a French cousin, who is heir to an immense estate, of seven hundred thousand million pounds sterling; and as for his costume, why, it ain't the best, he knows (the rascal was habited at the time in a miscellaneous assortment of dry goods, borrowed from the wardrobes of the Judge, Tom, the Major, and myself); but, Mr. Tapir, take the subscriber's hat on that, if he had the whole money he expects in his hands now, and was rigged up like a king of the Cherokee nation to boot, why, he'd go in with you, Mr. Tapir, in this business under con—consideration—he'd be so much yours, Mr. Tapir, that he'd have nothing left for himself. See small bills!"

Jack Tabor was leaning in his old well remembered manly fashion up against one side of his hotel, as we entered. Jack was the same tall, square-shouldered, full-chested, broad, clear-visaged man that I had known him years before. He was a little browner than when a student at Cambridge; a little more sallow, likewise, and wore a profuse moustache and very short hair; but he was as beaming and handsome a fellow as ever. Jack was attired loosely in cotton trowsers, shirt, and slippers, outwardly and physically, as doubtless inwardly and morally, in dishabille. Near Jack, and leaning up against the same side of the building, was another individual, not so prepossessing in his personal appearance. He was somewhat shorter, very much thinner, particularly in the neighborhood of the chest, with a slouchy, shirking look

about him, as if his frame had been bunglingly stitched together, in lieu of being fitted in the usual way, and an altogether hang-dog expression of countenance. He had a thin, seedy beard, a yellow skin, blood-shot eyes, and a general uncombed and unwashed appearance. He resembled Jack in one particular—his attire, which was of the same modest style, both as to quantity and quality. In all other respects, no two could be more utterly unlike. The third personage present—who was seated in a chair by a small table (the only furniture in the apartment, unless a row of movable shelves, adorned with bottles, decanters, and drinking vessels could come under that head), the reader has already recognised as Colonel Allen. Jack was, at the moment of our entrance, reaching over to remove a short wooden pipe from the mouth of his unprepossessing companion, preparatory to handing the same to Colonel Allen, that the bargain which had already been verbally consummated might be ratified on his part by a solemn smoke of the mutual pipe.

“Jack,” said Tom, calling his attention our way, “here’s another of the old guard, Joe Warrener.”

Jack turned upon us the same frank, genial look which had, in other days, been the admiration of the class.

“Shall it be hot whiskey-punch, gentlemen?” said he, taking a hand of each, and squeezing mine till it seemed to be fast in a vice.

We could do no otherwise than nod assent.

“But, Joe,” continued he, addressing himself to me, “you look shaky; never mind, a few glasses—*hot*, will bring you up. But what rosy god is this in your train; as far as one can judge by personal appearance, this might be Don Bacchus himself?”

I presented “Monsieur Crapolet”—

"My French cousin," murmured Colonel Allen.

"The rich expectant," said Jack. "Sir, I bid you welcome to the Mule's Tail."

"So you are actually established in the refreshment line at Gorgona; eh, Jack?" said I.

"True," said Jack, "and that reminds me. This gentleman," turning to Colonel Allen, "whom we have just admitted as a partner, you seem to be already acquainted with; but so far as this gentleman goes, I believe you have not the honor," turning to the ill-looking man—"This is Captain Gaitey, gentlemen, a hero and a scholar; a perfect gentleman, though he don't look like it."

An awkward suspicious nod from the Captain here illustrated the truth of Jack's latter observation.

"Captain Gaitey don't look very well just now, because he ain't dressed up," continued Jack, "but he is a very fine man. He has been almost everywhere and almost everything. His last business, previous to becoming a joint partner of mine in the Mule's Tail, was in the chain-gang at Havana. The Captain can tell you all about the horrible impositions practised upon foreigners, in the chain-gangs, by the miserable Cubans. Captain Gaitey, just pull up your trowsers a little, and show these gentlemen the marks of the iron on your legs."

The Captain's brow had been gradually darkening during this exposé of Jack's, and this unceremonious allusion to his legs was not at all to his taste.

"I don't tink," said he, speaking broken English, "dat dese gentlemen take any 'ticular interest in de personal condition ob my legs."

"Oh, yes, they do," persisted Jack. "They know you've been unfortunate, and they like you all the better; haul up your trowsers."

But the Captain still hesitating—"Never mind now," continued Jack, considerably, "these gentlemen are in no hurry, some other time will do as well; and now go and get a pitcher of hot water."

Captain Gaitey, by way of proving to us that his legs, notwithstanding any indignity they might have suffered from the Cubans, were still in working order, set off with the pitcher in hand, and presently returned with the desired liquid.

We drank merely a couple of rounds, by which time both Tom and Colonel Allen began to show symptoms of going to sleep on the premises; and Captain Gaitey, not appearing in the mood to drop any crumbs of wisdom from his stores of experience for our edification, I proposed going up to the hotel for the night.

"Well," said Jack, "I guess it's about time; we usually close at half-past eleven, but it's a kind of a broken up night to-night, and it seems we've run along to near one. Lead off, Captain Gaitey, and show the gentlemen the way to Miller's—I'll shut up shop."

* * * * *

Jack—there's many a nodding reader will thank you for that suggestion. This narrative of mine is likewise a kind of a broken up affair, and it seems that I too have run along a little beyond the prescribed limits; it's time to shut up shop. Should the reader at any future day, following the morrow's example of Tom and Colonel Allen, manifest a desire to return to his or her soporific, I shall be most happy to deal it out, "time and tide" permitting.

Until then, dear companion of *my* pleasant moments—meaning, of course, the reader—fare thee well.

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EAGLE PASS;

OR,

Life on the Border.

BY CORA MONTGOMERY.

CARA PATRIA
MAS CARA LIBERTAD.

NEW YORK:
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TO

Mrs. Samuel Hawley Sherman,

OF BROOKFIELD, CONNECTICUT.

To you, dearest guide of my youth, these pages are most appropriately offered, since but for your suggestion they would, probably, never have seen the light. To you, and for you, they were written, as you earnestly desired to hear what I saw, and what I thought, of "Peon Slavery on our Border." My observations are plainly and simply told. Few will heed these hasty and undeveloped sketches; but there is subject for serious thought and Christian action in this, as in every other form of human servitude, and so I cast my tiny protest-laden shell upon the ocean of public opinion. It may never touch haven, but with yourself, and the friends who make my world, it is sure of favor and sunshine, and that will more than repay the slight labor of,

Your grateful and devoted niece,

CORA MONTGOMERY.



PREFACE.

It was not at "the urgent solicitation of friends" that this volume was given to the press, for nobody was consulted in the matter. Beyond the assurance of the only one who had the "veto power" that he would not object thereto, and the wish of the beloved relative to whom it is dedicated, to see in printed record some shadowings of our border life, the writer never heard or cared for an opinion on this small subject. Still less was it for the pride or profit of authorship, for she was in no wise ignorant that neither could arise to any tempting extent from these crude pages, thrown off without system or premeditation, as the events occurred, or the thought pressed for utterance. They were written, and are published, because the facts existed, and the writer—wishing them known, and seeing no one else disposed to take the trouble—found no better way of giving them to the world.

It may not be true long—and every ray of publicity helps the cure—but it is true now, that the interests of humanity and the honor of the country are utterly neglected on the Rio Bravo frontier. Whether it be from ignorance or inertia, it is certain that a class of the highest officials of the nation closely imitate the Mexican dignitaries of a similar rank, in profligacy of expenditure and profound indifference to the wants of the people.

Our Indian policy is a blot on the very name of Christianity, yet what Senator or what General proposes any change, except, perhaps, something a little more veiled and indirect in our inexorable system of despoilment and extermination?

We have before us abundant evidence of wrong and outrage to American citizens in various parts of Mexico, but we have no

evidence that one step of firm, manly and decisive protest has been taken. With Mexico diplomatic compliments cost nothing and mean nothing, for her politicians are just as rich in words, and about as poor in acts, as ours are becoming in these latter days.

Unoffending and free-born residents on our soil have been torn from it by force, and carried with lawless violence into Mexico to be enslaved for debt, and not one victim, at the end of two years' supplication, has been officially demanded or returned to us. So far from it, indeed, that the *official record of impunity* is given in these pages—to the eternal shame of the public servant who refused to vindicate the outraged majesty of the Union. But it is also true that if a persevering demand is made for justice, the appeal must touch, at last, the popular heart; and then it is to be hoped we shall have done with apathy and evasions, and see these principles engraved in uneffaceable letters on our American policy:—

Free-born citizens shall not be enslaved for debt in Mexico. Americans and their property shall be protected from spoliation. The sanctity of our soil shall be vindicated with firmness.

We know our derelict public servants have failed to do their duty in these matters, and they will continue derelict so long as the people are silent; but they will hasten to amend their ways when the searching blaze of popular inquiry is turned upon their acts. The corruption and imbecility of our officials will grow upon us, until the press is aroused to take up the work and apply the cautery. Before this vague and irresponsible administration of our executive trusts is reformed into something more respectable and trustworthy, we may have to impeach some cabinet officers, and bring legislators under stringent laws of penal accountability; and why not? Why should our best-paid and most learned public servants do with impunity those things for which we would send a poor, untaught, poverty-tempted domestic servant to the penitentiary?

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Eagle Pass;

OR,

LIFE ON THE BORDER.

THE FRONTIER.

THE lone and remote border sentinel of the frontier state of Texas—the patient, unnoticed watcher in the gates, for the coming harvest from the equally unthought-of silver region; that rich ore-land which shoots down its sierras from a thousand miles to the north and west, to her very side, to within two or three hundred miles of the sea,—Eagle Pass, with only its one rude edifice, and its tented encampment, where the future Fort Duncan was to arise,—Eagle Pass, fair and healthy as is its site, and full of promise as are its position and prospects, did not seem on New Year's day of 1850, the place for stirring recollections. Yet it is a true miniature of Americanism; roughly limned and in water-colors, but with the genuine family look. We see it in the colossal beauty and conquering energy of the republican stock, and we can see, too, if we will consent to see them, some past stains not easy to cure, and some present blemishes which we would do well to amend. If we were to trace out in full the parentage of Eagle Pass, it would unveil some awkward passages in our national policy; and if the people would heed the warning, there is much to be said of an evil growth about to

take root on our border, and spread the baneful fruits of a new family of injustice, oppression, domestic strife, and foreign war, over the Union. It is here on this border that we must meet and blight, by the scorching fire of public opinion, the threatened iniquity of *peon servitude*.

The prosperous, well-stocked stores, the intelligent society that have started, as if out of the ground, in one short year, at this frontier point, more than a hundred miles from the nearest American town, are of themselves an expressive illustration of how the bold enterprise of our people knows to acquire territory, and to build up towns, and states. More than this, Eagle Pass is a piece of Texas; and around Texas is entangled the noblest, and the meanest acts, the most brilliant and the most clouded diplomacy, of the men and measures of our times. If the drapery and masking could be rent away, and all exposed in stern and rigid truth, not a thousand of our twenty-three millions could, or would believe the schedule of our last ten years' diplomacy to be a verity; they would say so many instances of weakness and corruption could never force their blots on the pages of our history. Neither could they, if the masses would be just guardians of their own interests, and not allow themselves to be sold and trampled down by that slimy monster Party, whom they have allowed to make his nest in their treasury, and rule from thence, the Union.

The highest statesmanship, the lowest evasions, the brightest and the vilest of our public acts, encircle Texas as with a mosaic frame. The ground mass is of the white imperishable marble of our institutions, bound with constitutional fillets of purest gold, and set with countless gems of precious ray, yet crossed and spotted with some most unsightly flaws of human infallibility.

At Eagle Pass we study the busy world at a safe distance;

as from a beautiful hermitage on the mountain side, that overlooks the city's turmoil, without being affected by its din or sharing in its strife. The cares and clatter of life come to us so calmed and tempered by distance that we can handle and probe their sickly unimportance at our convenient leisure, without the least danger of infection. Sectional opinions have lost their heat, and party malice its venom, before the papers, freighted with their prejudices, can reach the two hundred miles of Indian-infested country that lies between the coast and our home in the wilderness. Here we review and criticise, condemn or approve, with all the freedom of our American birthright, the wilful inertness, or obstinate blunderings of our public servants.

The Union—ocean-zoned and star-crowned; with all the treasures of the earth glittering on her bosom, and her imperial robe embroidered in flowing silver with a matchless tracery of lake and river; with climes of every hue cast over her like a gorgeous canopy; with thirty-one illustrious sons, already come to man's estate, to guard her with duteous love, and many a fair territorial daughter to grace her coming years—the Union, peerless mother of this noble family, can well afford in her greatness to confess that some specks dim the sun of her glory. So too may Texas, in the plenitude of her rich gifts, afford to own frankly the short-comings of her children, and keep henceforth to higher aims and more settled purposes.

A BIRD'S-EYE GLANCE.

I LANDED early in March, in Texas, and, as almost everybody is, was led captive by the fresh and verdant beauty of the coast region. The north was still shivering in the frost and sleet of lingering winter, but already green and laughing

spring was holding her revels on a carpet of flowers in the bright sunshine. A gay and radiant freedom seemed to pervade this land of fertility and promise, and with every drawback, in the shape of confused land titles, and the beginner's privations, there is no country under the sun in which a sober, sensible and industrious man can more certainly realize a quick independence and a delightful home. Somewhere or other in its vast extent, every one can find the features and productions that interest him most. There are those whose associations are with the interminable plains of the Mississippi, and who love to look out from a little island of trees on a boundless level of verdure, perhaps dimly marked in one direction by the undulating line of darker woodlands that fringe and define the course of some stream, like a shore of the sea, with its windings and promontories. Such must be delighted with the rich, broad prairies of southern Texas. They have there the deep alluvial for sugar, plenty of fish and game, splendid cattle, good horses, and some mosquitoes. Those there are again who demand a rolling, picturesque country, pure and sparkling water sources, and a soil that will return cotton and tobacco, as well as wheat and corn, and who turn their backs on sugar cane and trees veiled in garlands of gray moss. These have but to go back from the coast and find all the heart of man can desire in the way of cheap soil, and healthy, poetic situations in middle Texas. If he have a taste for the sublime and exciting, he has but to leave the coast some two hundred miles behind to hunt buffaloes and wild horses on the head waters of the Brazos and Colorado. If mine-hunting and glances of sparkling gold be more to his appetite, he can play at their own game of warfare with the Indians and explore the ore region that belts Texas on the north and west. If, finally, he would live like the patriarchs—and in a

country like their own promised land—surrounded by flocks and herds, in simple and bounteous plenty, he may come to the valley of the Rio Bravo and pitch his tent in the pleasant recesses about and above Eagle Pass. All these sections offer sure employment and independent homes on the easiest terms. If a healthy man is poor and homeless in Texas, it is because he is not manly enough to turn his hands to useful labor. It is the scourge of Texas—or rather has been, for these locusts are now less felt—that an army of idlers made of her hospitable homes the refuge of their worthlessness. Hundreds, too genteel to earn honest, independent bread—but not too genteel to accept their daily food in indirect alms from those who do—swarmed into Texas and lived on speculation until the vigorous life of the young country outgrew the canker. The scar of this plague is still visible in the chaos of law suits and land monopolies that overspread the state and so infect her titles that no prudent man will touch them without great precaution. But it is in process of cure.

INDIANOLA.

THE steamer Palmetto cast its swarm of sea-sick passengers ashore at Indianola the fourth day out from Galveston. Both Laraca and Indianola must be chartered cities, for it is the curious and laudable custom of Texan towns, to elect a Mayor and Common Council as soon as they have men enough to fill out the offices; and then, in paper-money days, they instantly issued their notes for circulation. Some of them did not wait for such an exuberance of population. Fair Richmond had, I think, but one building in it when it began to issue its amendments to the specie currency. The store-keeper in that one building was probably the Mayor and

population in general, and his clerk enclosed within himself the Recorder and Common Council. Yet Richmond is a lovely place, and will not fail to say of itself, as says every one of the precocious children of the Lone Star, that it is the most promising babe of the whole family.

Almost every league of land on the coast, or navigable rivers of Texas, has a town surveyed off, and each one of this legion of paper cities is avouched by its proprietors to be the most desirable spot on earth. Yet by a singular inadvertence it has rarely happened that business and capital have pitched upon the positively best locations, that is to say, almost never have they chosen with care and forethought those points of intersection of the foreign and domestic trade, at which the best facilities of communication have opened the widest range of demand for what came from abroad, to meet with the largest means of supply of home products. There was a tall, slow-spoken gentleman on board our steamer, who had become the possessor of "an interest in a town tract," who was more than anxious to make a huge, fault-finding Englishman's fortune by selling him a few lots in his "splendid sea-port." If he succeeds, I can fancy the blank dismay of the purchaser when he finds wild cattle the only inhabitants of the prosperous city.

These sales and the persevering ill-will which rival places manifest towards each other, have injured incalculably the character and growth of the country, yet, in spite of all that, there must be towns and commercial outlets, and fortunes will be made in creating them, as fortunes have been made elsewhere in the Union, by the judicious selection and outset of new places. But in doing this it must be borne in mind that steam has revolutionized the old rules, and the winds no longer confine commerce to those harbors that are accessible to sailing vessels. Trade is pressing its favorite depots more

and more inland, and as steam supersedes sails, thinks less than of old of being exactly on the coast.

Every body was disappointed in Indianola, it was so different from their ideas, but nobody found serious room for complaint. A belt of white sand separated the ocean of green prairies from the ocean of blue water, and along this belt was arranged a line of wooden buildings, unrelieved by trees or enclosures, like a string of overgrown packing boxes set out on the beach to dry. Lavaca, its neighbor and rival, is much the same thing, yet when these forlorn, undraped villages plant trees and robe themselves in verdure, as Galveston has done, they will be charming places. They were in such a hurry to commence business that they deferred adornments for a season. They are on the verge of a rich and extensive back country, intersected by numerous streams that fall into the Bay, all around them, and one or another of the hundred towns laid off on the smaller bays, that set up and indent the country from Matagorda Bay, *must* become the centre of a handsome trade. Where the most favorable point exists I might perhaps give a shrewd guess, as I have given the subject some attentive study, but it is not worth while to be ostracised by the ninety-nine towns that are out of the question, so I will bless them all and keep silence.

THE EBERLY HOUSE.

I SAID every body was disappointed, but astonished would be the better word, to find all their pre-conceptions so at fault on their arrival in Texas—not even excepting those who had lived there before. A brace of lounging, good natured, indifferent *boys*, as they call their male servants from nine to ninety, had taken charge of the baggage of a dozen or so of the passengers, and marshalled us up to “our house,” and

in a short time all were disposed of somewhere. The house was brimfull before, but in Texas single gentlemen are the unprivileged order, and a gallant colonel was ejected from his snuggery, and I installed in the very midst of his books, boxes and newspapers, not to mention a whole clan of fire-arms of every size and degree, as a matter of course. Instead of murmuring at the summary process of our landlady, who, by the way, is not used to rebellion in her household, the gentleman himself was the most active of any body in putting things in order for a lady stranger. In such prompt and cheerful sacrifice of their personal comforts and paid-for rights, the gentlemen of the Southern States shame the boasted chivalry of the knightly ages, as well as the courtliest of the court-bred of our days. It is a beautiful and distinguishing trait that this high-toned deference is paid not merely to the young, beautiful and distinguished, who command politeness any where, but to the poor, lowly and unknown. Every American, and most especially every southerner, holds himself as a man, bound by his manhood to render every protection and courtesy to woman. When I pressed my regret, therefore, at the inconvenience I was imposing on the Colonel in thus abruptly entering upon the possession of his private sanctum, he refused to think of it in any other light than a thing of course.

Eberly House and its lady proprietor are an epitome of Texas History. She was among the first settlers; had faced with resolute cheerfulness all the dangers and privations of its colonial infancy, and rejoiced as became a mother of the land when Texas boldly set up an independent existence. And never did a young housekeeper in the world of civilized nations, begin life in such utter destitution of the usual household gear of governments. There was not a church, a court-house, a prison, or an alms-house among the Anglo-

American settlements of Texas, when the Lone Star put forth her banner of Independence. She began with school-houses, and they soon grew into churches—with the printing-press, which soon unfolded into a free republic, and a state constitution that was the admiration of the highest statesmen of the country, for its liberal forethought and wise adjustment.

THE NORTH AND SOUTH.

A MILD, gentle-mannered Pennsylvanian intimated to me, in a quiet tone, under cover of discussion between the ladies, his pleasure and surprise at the well-dressed and comfortable appearance of the public—"even the colored persons seem to be decent and contented!" The truth was, Mr. Grey had come out with his head full of whips and chains, and his fear of being agonized by the shrieks and sufferings of the slaves, had troubled excessively his inclination to live at the south. The laughing, well-clad blacks, whose merry quips and gibes rung all day in such careless unconstraint in and about every house, turned all these preparations for indignant sympathy upside down. The poor gentleman was ready to be angry with them all for being so happy in servitude, but there was no help for it. The race in its present state of cultivation, cannot be reasoned into taking much heed of any thing that does not strike forcibly on their animal nature. I reminded him of this, but he shook his head doubtfully and sadly. "It is melancholy to see the race set down to slavery, as if it were in the natural order of Providence." "I was struck," continued Mr. Grey, "to observe at New Orleans, that if the population there could be divided into two portions, one including all the thin, anxious, care-worn faces, and the other all the jovial, contented, and well-fed ones,

there would be but a small sprinkling of whites among the healthy and happy looking, and a still fainter sprinkling of blacks in the class of troubled faces. Still I could come to no opinion from a three days' visit to a slave city."

"Did it ever occur to you," said a lady, suddenly turning from the window whence she had been contemplating the bay as it unrolled a sheet of molten silver under the noon-tide sun,—“Did it ever occur to you to arraign the plan of Divine Wisdom in giving these Africans black skins, thick lips, flat noses, and woolly hair?”

"Certainly not," said the astonished northerner, "but permit me to inquire the bearing of the question."

"Only this," replied the lady. "It seems to me exceedingly difficult to separate the facts, and determine how far this state of servitude is the inevitable consequence of the *physique* and the undeveloped character of the negro, and as such a part of the Divine plan. In short, how far it is the ordinance of heaven, and how far it is the work of human sin, and a stumbling-block to the progress of man."

Mr. Grey's blue eyes opened wider and rounder, and I gave a closer heed, for here the north and south, the principles of the one, and the practice of the other, had their champions. It grew interesting.

"Divine plan? Ordinances of Heaven? Surely, madam, you do not believe slavery was created by God?" asked the gentleman, completely afloat at the audacity of such a claim. "Surely you do not claim for it Divine parentage?"

"Only as it is claimed for the docility of the elephant, the endurance of the camel, the fleetness of the horse, and the fidelity of the dog. Thus far and no farther; they have the qualities for man's service by divine creation, and whether by divine appointment or not, man, sovereign of animals, and, above all, white men—the sovereigns of the inferior human

racess—are endowed with the gift and power to reduce them to his own uses.”

The clamor of the dinner-bell cut short this thoroughly characteristic argument too soon for my satisfaction, but as we rose to attend the summons, Mr. Grey inquired of the lady on what ground beyond difference of color she founded such an absolute judgment of the inferiority of the blacks.

“Three reasons,” replied she, carelessly, as she descended to the dining-room. “A negro nation has never attained eminence since the birth of history; next, no pure negro ever made an important invention, not even an alphabet, neither has mankind ever found among them a great teacher, whether as prophet, legislator, or poet.”

Mr. Grey’s reply was lost in the confusion of taking place at table, but whatever it was it gave a shade of thought to the countenance of his listener. Our English passenger was so delighted with the fine oysters, and so astonished to meet roast beef so juicy and tender, and turtle so perfectly delicious in this out-of-the-world corner, that his charity bubbled up to the brim, and he observed, in a semi-confidential tone, “There are many awkward things in the way, and many excuses might be urged in palliation of Texas having committed herself to slavery.”

GEOGRAPHICAL MORALITY.

WITH Mr. Grey came out Mr. Jobson, an English gentleman, who had purchased in Philadelphia the fourth part of the town of Arista, and was now in anxious quest of his town site. He had asked every body on board the steamer about it, and the more he inquired the more confused became his data and his ideas. He was the personal friend and correspondent of a celebrated anti-slavery leader, and like him was

inclined to set down every fault of church and state, as well as every mischance by land and sea, to the sin of slaveholding. He intimated to me semi-confidentially that he imputed to that "the general want of correctness in the land transactions of Texas," and especially the "unfindability of Arista," on which a mischievous young Kentuckian was continually condoling him. Mr. Grey was rather anti-slavery by the accident of his birth than for any other reason. Apples and anti-slavery are the natural growth of his latitude; oranges and negro servitude demand a warmer climate. He was almost certain to change his views with his residence on coming south. He was an American, and our morality on slaveholding topics is curiously geographical. It hardens into ice and marble in New England, and softens like the winters, with amazing rapidity and steadiness of progress as we move southward. With us it is a real wide-spread and deep-rooted social fact, and we deal with it for what it is—a political necessity and a constitutional existence.

With our sturdy Englishman it is simply and purely an abstract question of right and wrong, and he will never change his opinions, for he will never change his point of view. At all costs and by whatever way, he desires instant emancipation and the most perfect equality for the blacks in marriage relations, social influence and political rights.

That twenty millions of whites would certainly lose, and perhaps the three millions of blacks not gain by this abrupt amalgamation of the races, is nothing to the purpose; the principle is right in his estimation, and he thinks the right principle should be put in action immediately, if it sows earthquakes.

TEXAS LIVING.

THE sharp, impatient clang of the dinner-bell called some of the party to their first meal on Texas ground, and it was so abundant and excellent as to win the commendation of even our critical Mr. Jobson, with the single reservation that the venison and wild turkey had no justice in the cooking, a universal fault in America, he observed; and I therefore record it, that my countrywomen may amend their ways. In my ignorance I thought them excellently done, and if a fault there was, the biscuits and coffee atoned amply for the deficiency. Fish, oysters and turtle abound along the whole coast of Texas, and may be had for the taking; the prairies swarm with fine cattle, and where cows may be had at seven or eight dollars a head, and can run out and take care of themselves the whole year, it must be a poor manager that cannot ensure milk and butter, beef and veal, and working teams to his utmost desire. The woodlands that fringe every water-course, more or less deeply, shelter droves of swine that, like the herds of cattle, ask nothing better than to purvey their own subsistence. Poultry requires a little better tendance, but they do well here, and so do sheep and goats, except exactly on the coast. Add to this the facility of raising almost every variety of fruit and vegetable, and it may be said, in one sentence, that the established farmers of Texas, and of the western states of the Union generally, have abundant and hospitable tables, and the traveller must be delicate and difficult indeed if he is not suited with the fare. Almost the only really hard dinner that ever came before me in Middle Texas, I encountered at a day's stage from San Antonio, and that was served up in extra style. A handsome tureen, and china soup plates to match, were set forth on

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irreproachable damask, but the soup was only dirty salt and water, and the after course a very small desolate island of bacon in a prairie of something green and greasy-looking, mournfully flanked by a plate of very dry corn cakes. We did not venture upon the eatables, but we cheerfully paid for the sight of the nice tureen and soup plates, they were so refreshing. As no volume of reasonable capacity could hold an account of the substantial comforts of the table I have shared in sunny, abounding Texas, I take the traveller's right to dwell heavily on the per contra, and therefore must mention, with emphasis, that to my taste, the most unsatisfactory food ever set before me was that dinner of stone china.

At Indianola, our cheer was of a more varied and digestible character, and our party returned to the sitting parlor with the comfortable assurance that, whatever other privations might be before them, settlers in Texas need not apprehend dying of famine.

The sea-breeze came up gratefully from the bay as it unrolled its glittering sheet under the declining sun; and we gathered in the balcony, in front, to arrange our plans and admire the gorgeous canopy of crimson and gold that overhung his place of departure.

One day was given to Lavaca, and the next we took up our line of march to San Antonio in a stage chartered for our own private service. Mr. Jobson and his friend engaged a smaller carriage, in which they proposed to make an extensive circle of exploration—Mr. Grey to select a promising situation for trade, and Mr. Jobson to prosecute his voyage for the discovery of the unknown whereabouts of the city of Arista, of which his only landmark was a "certain blaze on a live oak tree." When he effects the discovery he will colonize it with knowing Lincolnshire graziers or sell out to a company; but, at the last advices, it was still unfound.

A CONVERT.

THE plan of travel being settled, the chat fell back on Texas and her most prolific staples, sugar, cotton, paper cities, cattle and slaves. It was amusing to trace back the gradual change in the views of my excellent friend, Mr. Grey. In Philadelphia he was held to be an able, and doubtless was a sincere, advocate of immediate emancipation. He had almost persuaded our gifted and ardent friend, George Lippard—"he with eye of light and soul of fire"—to write one of his burning romances, of which each sentence is a scathing sermon to oppressors, and make its heroine a fugitive colored girl. Gentle George, however, could not engage in the work, as he was already in harness against the Tyranny of Capital, and had full employment for lance and shield. Two months at Washington, and a most exemplary and believing attention to the debates of Congress, did for Mr. Grey what speeches in legislative bodies rarely do, simplified the matter, and modified his opinions. He was disposed to give over school-mastering the south on its home duties, and, with a more believing trust, leave emancipation to the progress of light and God's Providence. These were his words, and as he floated down the Ohio, on one side of which slavery is wicked and illegal, and on the other proper and lawful, he continued to grow in the faith that each State should be left to regulate its own morals. When he was down as far as Memphis, with slave-cultivated cotton fields on either bank, and slaveholding gentlemen on either side of him at table, and lovely slave-tended damsels glancing in beauty opposite him, he threw off an item or two more, with his cumbersome overcoat, now too heavy for the climate, and decided, in his secret mind, that it would be highly

absurd to insist on breaking up the Union for the sake of helping such pretty girls to black husbands, and he began to think this would be the prominent results of the wholesale levelling system. At Natchez he concluded that, with an equal population of ignorant blacks and prejudiced whites, some laws of self-preservation might be excusable in the existing social state, and fully excused the whites for so much of their code as was necessary to guard against insurrection and bloodshed. He had gradually discarded the courteous phrase of "colored brethren" for the pithy shortness of "blacks," and finally landed at New Orleans perfectly tranquil, if not slightly indifferent, about the "spread of slavery," against which he had been so actively and sincerely eloquent five months before. His northern anti-slavery morality had unconsciously, and quite honestly, too, softened and expanded in the warm rays of the southern sun. I am ashamed to confess it, but, on that subject, there is an enormous capability of expansion in American consciences; they are like that peculiarly useful article of which we make shoes and life-preservers—they stretch indefinitely when they come among cotton fields, and melt altogether in the ardent heat of sugar and rice plantations. But, then, we are a great people and extend our power—therefore, why not our consciences—over a vast reach of climate, latitude and production.

Mr. Jobson had hoped, on starting from the north, that his young friend, on witnessing the whole iniquity of slavery, face to face, would be strengthened up to the firm, uncompromising attitude of the British platform—perfect equality and entire amalgamation; and when he saw the hands steadily travelling backward on the dial, he could not conceal his astonishment and dismay. What if the Union does part in fragments in the strong convulsion, let the cure be instantly applied and slavery expelled from the system. Children in medicine talk

of patience and time curing the cancer and saving the frame entire, but he said cut off and cast out the cankered limb.

A lady, northern born, but transplanted to the south by a happy marriage, interposed the observation that in cutting off the Southern States from the family of the north, slavery would not be cured the sooner, and that in no case were the unaffected members of the Union in danger of taking the disease. "Cast them out all the same as leprous sinners, unless they will quit their sins and embrace their colored brethren as equals," insisted Mr. Jobson.

But, said Mr. Grey, half ashamed of his conversion, and ashamed still more to see the inconsistency of his old position, "Absolute equality, this marrying and giving in marriage, between opposite races, is what not one of the Northern States would desire or consent to, and still less would the Southern States tolerate it, for the number of blacks is so great that half a dozen States would soon be represented in Congress by colored delegations."

"Surely, your free States would not object to meeting and mingling on equal terms with the representatives of the race for whose elevation they had labored so earnestly?" asked Mr. Jobson, warmly. "I think they would," said Mr. Grey, coloring; "yes, undoubtedly they would. We demand political equality for the Africans among us, but object to intermarriage as deteriorating and inexpedient for the whites."

Mr. Jobson thrust his hands in his pockets, and choked off with difficulty a low whistle. "Well, upon my word, Mr. Grey," he broke out at last, "your distinctions are too nice for me. You are excessively anxious to give the colored race their rights, but equally resolute against the natural and inevitable consequences of their possession. Political equality and social amalgamation are twin sisters, and if you insist on one how can you reject the other?"

Mr. Grey murmured something about prejudices of color, inexpediency and late hours, and withdrew to his bedroom, apparently unwilling to continue the argument, and reluctant to avow the fact that he was already a convert to southern opinions.

I cautioned the stalwart *negrophilo*,—to borrow a word the Cubans have lately coined,—not to be rash in his arguments, for they might be misunderstood at the south, where it was a stringent necessity of self-preservation to suppress all discussions that could tend to unbridle the tiger that sleeps by their hearths. And so the “good night” passed around, and all went their ways to dream of other scenes and other subjects for the morrow.

THE ROAD.

WE paused but one day at Lavaca, and that was passed in-doors, for it was one of those days of unintermitted sunshine in which a Texas March is as rich as a New York June. The day fled agreeably, for the intelligence and polish of Mrs. S.'s family were equal in tone and interest to the requirements of good society anywhere. And here I may observe that persons from the olden States, and, still more, those from Europe, are astonished to find in a new country such a mass of mental force and acquirement as they encounter in Texas, without considering that the advantages of its fertile, well-placed domain, and the absolutely nominal price of land, are calculated to draw hither the choicest enterprise of the enterprising Union; not to mention that it was also, for a time, the most pleasant and convenient refuge in the world for such gentlemen as, by any chance, came to have a falling out with the laws at home. It is not now, neither has it ever been, the right home for the baser class of crimi-

nals. Thieves have to turn honest here, or leave the country. Nobody can thrive in any of the leading branches of their ancient and extensive profession, but a few border Mexicans in the horse and cattle line, with here and there a small lawyer who pilfers under license of statute, as in other countries.

After we left Lavaca, and had leisurely rolled some fifteen or twenty miles over the track to Victoria, we were joined at dinner by Mr. Grey and Mr. Jobson, who had fully kept pace with our four-horse stage in their light carriage. They were both enchanted with everything. The country, the climate, the people, all came in for such a plenteous bounty of praise that I fairly changed sides, and was forced to remind them of the inconveniences they might expect, instead of, as before, dwelling on the advantages that lay within their grasp. They looked around at the tidy comfort of the room we were in, turned over some books that filled three or four well-arranged shelves, glanced through the open windows at the boundless vista of green, rolling prairie gemmed at intervals with trees just bursting into foliage, and then sat down before the snow-white cloth to praise the golden butter, delicate batter cakes, and nicely dressed chickens, of our well-mannered hostess. The country between Matagorda Bay and Victoria is almost Belgic in its level and rich repose. Thence on to San Antonio it is park-like in its varied yet tranquil beauty. More green and fertile it cannot be, but more rolling and picturesque it is, though rarely rising to the dignity of precipitous hills. The road is wholly inartificial, and just winds where the chances of travel led the track over the immense expanse, like a huge dust-colored serpent taking his own time and comfort over the carpet of grass and flowers. In the rainy season, of course, this road through a rich alluvial region, becomes heavy in mud, and makes travelling very hard upon the poor horses; yet even in blithe

March, when the roads were as hard and smooth as a Macadam street, we only moved on at the rate of thirty or thirty-five miles in a day, and were five of them in getting to San Antonio.

The first two nights out our acquaintances slept in different hostelries from those we stopped at—for in Victoria and other towns there are more taverns than one—but on the third night we continued in company on from our dining-house.

A PIONEER MOTHER.

THAT was kept by an excellent dame, whose land extended like a small German principality, a mile or two in every direction from her log castle. She was united to her third or fourth husband, I forget which; but I recollect that the first was killed by the Indians while defending his homestead; the second fell in defence of Texas, at the Alamo, when Travis and his band resolved to hold it until no man was left to haul down the Lone Star, and deliver the fort to the Mexican besiegers. She observed quite philosophically, that it was well enough for single men, who had good horses and no families, to run away from the Indians, but when people had stock, and children, and house plunder, and a stout log cabin to cover them, the shortest way was for the mother to sit down by the fire and run bullets for her old man to give to the Indians. "There is a heap less trouble in it, and less scare too, than to be scattering off, and letting the hogs and cattle scatter off, every time the Indians come about." So said, and so acted the old lady, and, sure enough, there she is at last planted safely and comfortably in the midst of her flocks and herds like one of Homer's rural princes.

Mr. Jobson was much taken with this remnant of the early history of Texas, and somewhat in violation of his implied pledge of truce, he endeavored to requite her information by devoting to her use some of his lights on the subject of slavery, and the equalization of the black and white races. He eulogized the courage and industry which had made her the mistress of such a homestead, and then went on to draw a comparison between the servitude of wages and the servitude of inheritance. It was so profound, so logical, and so philanthropic, that Channing, had he heard it, would have hailed him as a disciple, and Frederick Douglass as a brother; but our stout-hearted, practical border-mother only opened her eyes wider and rounder, as she drifted farther and farther from his meaning. His long words were too heavy for her dictionary range, and generally overshot the mark, but all the same she liked the grand resounding tones, and listened with devout attention until a chance ball made a breach in the wall and let in some light, and then she flew to the defence.

Mr. Jobson had, at last, sailed back to the shoals under her eye, when he rounded off his essay by a sort of general axiom that, as suffering and ignorance were the only difficulties in the way of real equality, the whites had but to free their slaves and educate them, to make them in every way like brothers of the same family. This was throwing the shell into the very magazine of the prejudices of a woman "born in Tennessee, raised in Alabama, married in Mississippi, and settled in Texas."

"No, sir," she said, in the resolute tone of one who sees the thing through and through, and cannot be talked out of her mind. "No, sir, there is no sense in that, no sense at all. If a poor white woman like me sends her children to school, and has them learn the same books and ways as the

President's children, and if they are as bright and well behaved as the President's children, they are just as good, and all of the same color ; for I reckon their father and I are as white as any body ; but all the schooling in the world won't grammar that child's wool into straight hair," pointing to a shining black urchin who had come to the door to take a full and satisfactory survey of the strangers.

" But, my dear madam," said Mr. Jobson, not a little surprised at the sudden waking up of the storm, " consider that these differences are merely physical."

" Physic can't cure it," replied the unconvinced dame. " No medicine can doctor away that black skin or woolly head. No, sir, all the plasters and poultices in the world, nor all the colleges either, wouldn't make them thick lips, and that flat nose, into a likely white boy's face. Physicking indeed !"

" Not into a white boy's face, but the same teaching and encouragement might make him the equal of a white boy," insisted Mr. Jobson.

" At that rate it would be just as well for the white folks, if all colors were put into one dish and shook together in one mess, and I don't believe in that doctrine," replied his antagonist, in high disdain ; and she set about clearing off the table, and with it the argument, with an air of abated respect for her guest's eloquence.

" Did you ever hear such narrow and bigoted ideas ?" observed Mr. Jobson, as he parted with us to join Mr. Grey in their own vehicle. His only answer was a gentle admonition for provoking such discussions in a slave country, where the people were almost absurdly sensitive and irritable on those points.

We waited a few minutes longer to hear the opinions of the other party, and were pleased to find her equanimity

fully restored, and the more completely as she remarked, half in the way of question, that the gentleman was likely a minister, or something of that sort, whose head was turned by hard study.

"Only to think," she said, laughing at the recollection, "that a little physicking will make a white gentleman of a nigger boy. Well, the Lord above knows what is best, and he has fixed it all his own way. He has made the blacks and the whites as he pleased, and gave them their places without asking a crazy doctor where he should put them." With this reference of the whole matter to the will of Heaven, we exchanged farewells, and resumed our way. It was the last argument but one that Mr. Jobson ventured upon, and there he was overwhelmed and silenced by the audacious flight of his antagonist, who boldly averred that the negroes were fitted, and, as it were, ordained, in the creative scale of arrangement, to an inferior existence by their conformation, like camels, horses, and elephants. "I think self-interest and a broiling sun discomposes the brains of southern men," said the astounded Englishman, and this conviction, far more than personal prudence, tended to wean him from these discussions.

SAN ANTONIO.

WE drew up, on the fifth day from the coast, in front of a spacious and handsome house at San Antonio. The grounds were ample, neatly laid out, and beautifully encompassed by a curve of the river, but it was a new place, and the trees and shrubbery were not large enough for shade. Two or three ladies, whose dress and manners did not belie their rank, and an officer or two in undress, were chatting in the

shade of the broad piazza. With a more flowing abundance of vines and flowers it might all have passed—house, grounds and company—for a suburban London villa, occupied by some retired officers, and I mourned that we had parted with Mr. Jobson a day back on the road, for it was a sight to charm his neat and cosey taste.

Here a stout mule carriage and our servants awaited us, and we but permitted ourselves a few days to see the old missions and the far-famed crystal springs—from which the San Antonio gushes at once a full grown river—before we entered upon our trip across the belt of uninhabited and Indian-haunted country that borders the Rio Bravo. Another lady—Mrs. C. the wife of the senior proprietor of Eagle Pass—was to be of the company. Our train consisted, therefore, of two strong, well appointed mule carriages, protected by our two gentlemen and three armed servants on horseback, one of whom led, with the saddle ready to be adjusted at a moment's warning, an easy-paced pony, to diversify my mode of travel when I tired of a covered carriage.

We are now leaving behind us the broad, fertile zone of southern Texas, in which negro servitude prevails, and glancing by the edge of that healthful, picturesque middle region that the Germans have come over from fatherland to make free soil, and dispart from Texas, somewhere about 1860. At last we enter upon the grassy solitudes that border the Rio Bravo. Here is met a system of servitude new and alien to the sentiment of the United States, but it may take root, acclimate itself, and flourish on our soil, as is said of certain noxious insects with which the old world has gifted our grain fields. So far we have made no gain out of enslaving the Indians. We have slaughtered the red race, driven them from their groves, buried their history and traditions in the graves of a hundred exterminated tribes, yet we have failed to turn their

blood and sweat into dollars. We have conquered their lands wherever we fancied them worth having, but have fallen far short of the Spaniards in success. In taking the soil they seized also the native lords of the soil, and turned them in with whip and chain to till it for the benefit of the conquerors. We Anglo-Americans have not managed so well; our Indian tribes will drink our fire-water and die, but they will not give their limbs to our service, nor bequeath to us their children for slaves—stubborn creatures that they are—so we have to be content with killing them off and taking all their lands. Like good Christians we resign ourselves to do without the bones and sinews of the red race—since they are not to be had—and take care of the rest.

Such thoughts forced me to look history in the eye, when Victor, our confidential servant, and a man of pure Indian descent, stood in silent, motionless respect to receive the order of preparation for the journey. He was slight, rather well-formed, easy and lithe in his movements, but with the serious, self-contained air that characterizes his race. His dark face was seamed with the small pox, but it spoke intelligence and courage, and his eye wore a winning expression of attachment and confidence when it turned on his master. In a few, but remarkably well-chosen words, Victor intimated that he understood his orders, and then disappeared with noiseless step. In the future my sole trust for servants, domestic attendance, and the most part of my human companionship, is in these tamed Indians. Well, I rather like the prospect.

The early evening was soft, fresh and star-lit, and I remained in my room alone for an hour, musing over a thousand confused fragments of the past and present, when my attention was attracted by two figures in deep chat, a short distance from the open window. One I fancied, and correctly,

to be Victor ; the other was a larger person, and as I could readily observe in the clear obscure, an Indian of fine and graceful proportions. Victor was waiting to speak to his master as he came out from supper, and as I soon gathered from their conversation, his companion had seen him as he entered the garden for that purpose, and made himself known as an old friend. At first I only noted the flowing elegance of their mutual compliments and the rigid politeness with which each entitled the other Señor, but the stranger's remarks soon absorbed my entire attention. It was a moving tale, and opened to me an unexpected view of border life. I give it now, though in fact it was only completed by after inquiry and information.

THE INDIAN SLAVE.

SEVERO VALDEZ and our Victor had been scholars together in a free school attached to some convent in their distant and fruitful Guadalaxara. They had both learned to read, and Victor even to write, when they were parted, Severo to follow his parents into servitude, for they had fallen in debt, and were sold by debtor's law as peons to the magnificent estate of Santa Merced (Holy Mercy), many leagues this side of his native city. Victor came eastward in the service of a Mexican officer, and after many wanderings, found himself at Matamoras some two years before the Mexican war. Here he met again his old class-mate, Severo. The hacienda of Holy Mercy was one of those vast peon-holding properties peculiar to Mexico, and even in that land it had a bad reputation for giving over-allowance of work and an under-allowance of food. The peck of corn allowed per week to the *peons*, or slaves, for debt, was of two or three years' old stock

and often alive with insects, as the fresh corn of the current year had to be stored. A thousand head of cattle ranged on the outskirts of the estate, and seven thousand sheep and goats divided with them the pastures, but the peons only tasted meat about twice a month, and then each pound served out was charged to them, to swell their debt of servitude. Severo endured his lot while his mother lived, but when she died he broke away. His situation of *vaquero*, or mounted herdsman, gave him a fine start in advance, and he was fifty miles on the road to freedom before his flight was announced to the overseer of the Holy Mercy. The poor old father was suspected of counselling his escape, and in his rage the mayor domo handled the old peon so cruelly that he laid down on his mat and never left it again. In a week from Severo's departure the other peons dug a hole, rolled up the corpse in his ragged mat for coffin and winding-sheet, and cast it in the earth without further ceremony, for such is the usual peon custom of burial. All this, when he came to hear it, did not increase Severo's desire to return to the sweets of Holy Mercy; and he worked, starved and travelled forward until he reached Saltillo. There he fell sick, and after enduring his situation with Indian fortitude for two weeks, the peon who lent him all he had to share—a corner of his hovel for shade and an ox hide for a bed—induced him to sell himself to a baker of the place for the necessary medicine and sustenance. He served his master, the baker, with fidelity and good will, for he was treated kindly, but the fear of being reclaimed by his first owner haunted him continually, and he was more than glad when it was proposed to transfer his services to a muleteer bound for Laredo. To Laredo he went, still in peon servitude however, for it is a sort of miracle for a bound debtor to regain his freedom, and there he ranged the banks of the Rio Bravo in his original capacity of va-

quero or herdsman. Here begins the entanglement of his story. An American merchant of Matamoras wished a reliable and competent man to go down to the coast with his mule train; and by a triple arrangement between Severo, his master and the merchant, the active and faithful young peon was to serve six months for his debt of \$30, and then become free when the American went to New Orleans in the spring. At Matamoras he chanced to encounter Victor, and renewed with him the friendship of younger days. Victor was about to go up the river to Laredo, and was charged by his friend with many messages to a peon family to which it turned out Severo was united by the strongest bonds. He loved deeply the young niece of a Laredo peon, Josefa, who was free and appeared likely to remain so, as she was active, industrious, and a good seamstress. To earn her hand in legitimate marriage was the great object of his life, and to become free himself was such a helpful and desirable step, that he consented joyfully to six months' servitude, including, also, a season of yellow fever, which he was expected to stay over and above his time, during the absence of his new master in the United States. Victor, while at Laredo, discharged punctually his duty to his friend, and even wrote letters for Josefa, informing Severo from time to time of her steady remembrance. Meantime Severo completed his probation, and returned in less than a year, well dressed for his condition, and much improved by his residence among Americans. He hastened to claim his bride. Unhappily she had fallen into peonage by some misfortune, but Severo did not hesitate to become surety for her debt of \$15, and make her his wife. This exposed him to be peonized himself any day, but his work was mainly devoted to the service of the creditor, who kept his own open account with them, advancing, while they were at work for him, the beans and corn for the daily bread of the couple.

They settled from the first on the east side of the river, and when, at the close of the war, all the hither bank was recognized as United States territory, they became, by the express terms of the treaty, American citizens. This, which should have been a sure guarantee of liberty and protection, cast the unhappy family into the most incurable misery. I would state the case distinctly, for it presents what most Americans will find it hard to believe, that our country permits on her border an atrocious and peculiar system of

KIDNAPPING.

WHEN hostilities first kindled with Mexico, Severo entered into the employ of a muleteer, who continued near and with the army during that memorable first campaign in which such splendid victories were won to no particular end, and such massive movements were so bravely pressed for no particular object. This service kept Severo far from home most of the war season, but more than once the fond husband mounted his horse and rode all night through a dangerous region to pass one day with Josefa and his child; and then he would repeat the same rough ride the next night, and report himself at sunrise ready for his usual duties. About the conclusion of the war, the knowledge of their citizenship, and the enhanced security and prosperity they hoped to attain under the American laws, began to make a deep impression upon the Indian families on our side of the Rio Bravo, and on none more than the freedom-loving Severo. To educate his first-born, his boy Marcos, to the stature of a free-born American was a dream of delight to his soul. When peace was proclaimed he made an eager, hurried visit to his home at Laredo, and then hastened to the healthy and romantic town of Corpus Christi,

to solicit permanent employment from the celebrated Col. Kinney, the proprietor of a domain exactly three times as large, and ten times as fair, as the principality of Queen Victoria's father-in-law. The sorrow-stricken Indian returned to find his home desolate. Although American citizens by law, by service, and by loyalty, the Mexican hawks had not feared to swoop down upon our soil, and clutch away his helpless ones in his absence. The thrice-paid creditor of Josefa had conveyed her by threats and force to the Mexican side of the river, where there was little trouble in having her assigned to him as a debtor-slave. Her young American-born son was consigned to the same fate to meet the cost of bringing him up, and thus with every form of Mexican law they were sent, mother and child, to wear out their lives in the harshest slavery known on this continent.

Severo appealed to an officer of the United States army for redress—it was not in his line of duty. He applied to the civil judge—he could not pursue the offence into a foreign country; this provision, so necessary to border tranquillity, having been overlooked in the haste of making the peace treaty. In his despair of other help, and perhaps with a lingering faith in the sanctity of his American citizenship, Severo set forth to have an interview with Josefa and her master, and if he could make no other offer for her freedom, he resolved to give his own body to redeem his wife and child. He had a few dollars in money and a good horse; perhaps he thought he could prevail on Don Matias to accept them—as they were of more value than the original debt—together with a year or two of their united service, and then dismiss them all in freedom. It was an illusive hope. Instead of listening to his proffers of triple payment, Don Matias coolly claimed the horse as the estray of some friend or other, and seized Severo as his own lawful peon. Severo

heard the sentence of the alcalde in the stern, unmoved silence of his much enduring race, and whatever he nourished in his heart, no severity of labor or suffering wrested a complaint from his lips. He toiled and watched more than a year before an opening for escape offered for Josefa, and without her he would not leave. At last, when Don Matias returned near the bank of the Rio Bravo, and placed them all on a rancho, or cattle farm, not far from Mier, the time of deliverance seemed at hand. Patience and courage brought a favorable moment for the attempt, and it was made. The river was gained, was crossed; the whole family stood free citizens on the soil of the Union; some miles were travelled in the direction of the town of Brownsville—for Severo had learned to fear the absence of protection at Laredo—and the happy family laid down to rest in the serene freshness of the open sky. They folded themselves in their recovered liberty as in a garment of joy, and slept without fear. Alas, for the weakness or obscurity of our laws! their pursuers had followed keenly on their track, and before the dawn they were overtaken, bound, and re-conveyed to the Mexican bank and a more embittered slavery.

Four months of suffering, distinguished only by the death of their boy, again terminated in the escape of Severo by a desperate flight, in which Josefa could not share. This time he did not pause until he reached the interior town of San Antonio, whence he proposes to dispatch the money for the purchase of his wife, if, indeed, her broken health holds out until he can earn the amount.

MISSION OF SAN JOSE.

My heart was still echoing to the sad notes of peon bondage, and heavy with the prophecy of wrong, exile and extermination to the Red Race, when I stepped into the carriage to visit the ruins of San José. A ride of five miles over the pastoral plains that environ San Antonio brought us before what was once the beloved school and abundant home of hundreds of reclaimed Indians. Silence now reigns in the desolated mission. We drew up before the broken arcades of the cloisters, and glanced hastily at the plan. The ground floor had been divided and occupied, as is generally seen in religious houses, by a refectory, or dining hall, and the other larger rooms of the community. The second story was devoted to the cells or sleeping apartments of the fathers. They were plain, substantial, and reasonably commodious, all opening in a line on the gallery over the ground arcades. We then went round to the church front, to observe if it could be true, as we had heard, that parties of volunteers for the Mexican war had in mere turbulence of spirit defaced the old sculptures that dated back almost to the first Christian settlements. On one side of the old carved doorway stands the statue of Joseph, "the just man," the husband of Mary. He is the San José to whom the church is dedicated. On the other side in a corresponding niche is Mary and her child Jesus. All these figures have been shot at, disfigured and mutilated by parties of Americans, who thus evinced their dislike to bigotry by a bigotry still more intense. They proved the soundness of their Christian and republican instruction, by a dishonest waste of others' property and a spiteful intolerance of others' creeds.

The country around lay in green and tranquil repose, scarcely changed in aspect since, two centuries ago, the first fathers of the mission astonished the cannibal idolaters of this region with the tidings of the Christ who died on the cross for the salvation of man. They saw the image of the Redeemer crowned with thorns, and were made to understand how the cross is the symbol of atonement. From his manger-cradle through all his miracles and trials, to his radiant ascension, the divine life and mission of the crucified Saviour was laid before them, in pictures so clear and vivid that, to the untutored children of the forest, these paintings were but little less miraculous than the acts they represented. These lessons were repeated in processions, and enforced continually on heart and soul by the solemn ritual of the church. In this is one of the secrets of their wonderful missionary success. They clothed their teachings in forms of life, and voiced them in melody. Then the community system surrounded their lives on earth with peace and abundance, while it gave them tranquil preparation for the life to come. If this government would shelter and ration the tribes that it is slaughtering in cold blood by paying them annuities in rum; if it would gather their children in Manual Labor Schools instead of leaving them to demoralize and waste away in idle, untaught vagabondism, it would cost the treasury no more, and would certainly accord better with the missionary spirit of our people. We who send two or three hundred thousand dollars a year to enlighten the heathen of Asia should not refuse a tithe of this aid to our heathen at home. The less so, it is to be hoped, as we have deprived them of all things else, and so hemmed them up in little barren corners of what was once their heritage, that they must accept civilization or death—they have no other choice at our hands.

COMMUNITIES.

THIS way is open to us, and there is no other in which we can redeem the two unhappy races who are in contact with white domination on this continent. Assign them homes and give them industrial teachers—I am speaking now of the Red Race, for to the African, colonization abroad is the only resource, but on the same principle, of community and patriarchal guidance—assign sufficient and permanent domains to the tribes still in existence, use the money which the Federal Government is expending upon them for their hurt, in establishing comfortable quarters for those too old to learn, where they should receive soldiers' rations, and cloth and blankets to their taste, up to the value of a soldier's clothing, all this to be issued to them at their homes and no where else, and in no other form than that of subsistence and raiment. Let their own chiefs report whether these duties be fully observed, and not made the speculation of Indian agents.

The youth of the tribe to be collected and taught letters, morals and industry, at permanent and systematic schools. As they advance in years they can till the land and man the workshops for the community, on such terms of reward as shall be just and beneficial to the general weal, but always under the joint supervision of government and their own chiefs, until civilization and the capacity of self-government shall have taken firm root. These tribes would be nurseries for such a powerful, efficient and economical border cavalry as is the especial want of this republic.

How grievous it is to hear a senator reply to this petition for an effective guardianship of the Red Race, that "it would be so troublesome." We can plunder, but we cannot protect,

and at the same cost we find it more acceptable to exterminate than to make reparation.

It cannot be said that it is uncongenial to the wild nature of the Indians to live, labor, and be instructed in a settled community. So far from this being true, there was near half a million of these wandering tribes collected in the course of a century in the various Missions which dotted, like islands blooming in the desert, the whole expanse of wilderness from one end to the other of our double continent. A line of these Missions stretched from California to the Mississippi a hundred and fifty years back, and diverging in the great valley in two lines of light, one crossed the peninsula of Florida to meet the Atlantic, and the other boldly pressed up the Ohio until its rays illumined the dark forests of the northern lakes. In South America a beautiful and flourishing state arose in the wilderness under the hands of the Jesuits, so beautiful and flourishing indeed that the kings of Europe grew hungry for its spoils. They drove away the missionary fathers, and blackened their fame with a thousand falsehoods in order to seize the more freely their helpless prey. Like this was the fate of San José, and other missionary stations in Mexico. Their greedy rulers saw these estates were well-cultivated and profitable domains, the Indian proselytes most convenient slaves, and as such they were too tempting to escape the merciless grasp of a soldier despotism. In that one sentence is told the fate of the chain of desolate habitations that extend from New Mexico to California, and of a hundred thousand peons, whose fathers thus fell into bondage and transmitted to them an inheritance of misery.

Doubtless these old fathers were in the wrong, since popular opinion says so, and popular opinion ought to be revered as infallible, albeit it called vehemently for the crucifixion of the Prince of Peace, and took Barabbas the

thief to its arms. Doubtless they were criminal in not teaching the poor Indians a better Christianity than they knew themselves. Doubtless the uninstructed children of the wilderness deserved slavery and death for making processions in honor of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and asking her intercession, when they should have been inspired to address their prayers directly to himself; but it was still something better than their old sacrifices of prisoners of war. Doubtless they sinned deeply in cherishing the relics of Christian martyrs, almost as devoutly as we would a button of Gen. Taylor's battle-garments at Palo Alto, or a cast shoe-string of Bonaparte or Victoria, but even this was better than the usages of their ancient faith—to tear open the breasts of living men and cast the quivering heart, yet warm in blood, in offering to their grim, monster idols.

OUR TRIP.

ON St. Patrick's day our company mustered for the trip across the broad prairies and untrodden hills that unroll between San Antonio and the Bravo. Our two carriages, three mounted servants, led mules, and escort of friends made a gay and joyous cavalcade. The sides of our carriages bristled with fire-arms, like a brace of small travelling arsenals. Our two gentlemen never laid aside their trusty six-shooters, for even in sleep they were under the head within prompt touch. At night, the baggage was taken out and embanked under the carriages, and our beds made upon their comfortable floors, for they were on the ambulance pattern of vehicles, strong, spacious, and fit for all weathers. Victor, who had decided to enter my service for the future—of his own free judgment and without my asking,—had charge of an active, docile black pony, that bore my saddle

in case I desired to exchange my seat in the covered carriage for an occasional canter over the tempting flower-embroidered plains. In his anxiety to be generally useful he had piled on my saddle a small tower of kitchen-commodities for the road ; but at the first halt we amended that, and Victor and Chino held their after-way a very respectable and satisfied-looking palfrey and squire of dames.

At the little streamlet Rosita we stopped to lunch on Mrs. C.'s delicate biscuit and cold chicken. There we bade farewell to our escort of friends, who turned their horses' heads towards San Antonio, while we launched forth on the interminable prairie. To me it was a holiday of delight. The country is one wide-rolling, ever-varying ocean of verdure, flashing back in golden smiles the radiant glance of the sun, while the fresh breeze tossed and waved the changeful tresses of bright flowers in frolic gaiety. Through the day we seemed to have all this world of beauty to ourselves as our train wound—the only sign of human existence—over its broad, silent expanse, but nightfall brought hints of darker omen.

INDIAN SIGNS

THE sun was low, and our eyes were wandering admiringly over a small tarn encircled in copse-wood, and gleaming serene and clear as a beryl in its emerald setting, when suddenly parting through the thicket we came upon some broken and abandoned carts. The experienced eyes of our gentlemen instantly detected marks of Indian handiwork. We know now that an unhappy family met there a bloody end, all but a young daughter or two who were led to a more horrible fate. Some years hence, when it would be more wise and merciful to leave them with their Indian

lords, our government will make atonement for its present negligence by bringing back these girls—with many a ringing flourish of dollars and trumpets—to kindred who will be ashamed to receive them, and who will condemn them to a life of neglect and abasement.

Scores of captive women and children are now sinking to this miserable lot because Congress would spend the time in *talking* economy, and wasting money on useless, and worse than useless, missions of compliment to foreign royalties, when it should have occupied itself in providing for the survey of national communications, and the defence of this Indian-infested border. I say the *survey* of national highways, for there is no need of opening the sluices and flooding the country with corrupt contracts to construct them; only tell the people where run the best routes from sea to sea, and assure them that the government will protect these national channels of communication, and trade and travel will find the way to work it straight and smooth as soon as it will pay dividends.

Our course lay nearly in a line with one of the great natural routes to the Pacific, as well as the present barrier of separation and defence between the inhabited and Indian-ranged districts of Texas. This line, drawn from the head of navigation on the Bravo nearly in direct course to the Red River near its outlet into the Mississippi, would intersect the three great rivers of Texas—the Colorado, Brazos and Trinity—at their respective heads of navigation and through their ducts, each tapping the Gulf of Mexico, would bring into action an extent of fertile domain equal in productive powers to all France. It would touch the Mississippi where it would meet the long, grasping, railroad fingers which the Atlantic shoots forth to bring closer in family union the sisters of the west. Here is the great track to the Pacific which

the government, with the grave and solemn blindness of an owl, is looking for everywhere else. The eagle symbols well the daring flight of our restless and resistless people, but the owl is the bird of their rulers. It is slow, portly and voracious, with a keen scent and a mighty clutch for the spoils, but not at all gifted with eye and pinion to mark the way and clear the path from sea to sea. No, my poor owl, you will flutter your stupid wings among the treasury-vouchers at Washington, and leave the great national lines of union and defence for the eagle-enterprise of the people to discover, and clear from hovering Indians.

We were taking our last breakfast of the trip at the Chacon, in a fresh, keen norther, when we heard again of the Indians. Our people found two soldiers who had been killed by them. The bodies were committed to the earth, and in an hour the incident was forgotten. Life sits lightly on a borderer. Neither his own nor his friend's is spared any risk, and as for the Indians, in his eyes they were only made to be killed. The slaughter therefore of a soldier or two was hardly of sufficient interest to supply an hour's chat, and they were never recurred to after their graves were left behind.

In the afternoon of that day we wound through some romantic hill-slopes, and entered what appeared like an endless succession of orchards. The river flashed out and disappeared at intervals like a chain of lakes on our left, and on the right a range of precipitous hills came down to the road, as if to question the right-of-way. On reaching the shoulder of the hill the foremost carriage wheeled into a green nook embosomed in this rocky wall, and some one called out,

"This is Eagle Pass."

I glanced round, and saw a vast tree-sprinkled plain, between the hills and the gleaming river, and at its farthest

edge a cloud of sheep, like the snow-capped waves of the sea breaking on the green shore, came surging towards us with extended front. With slower step a herd of handsome cows were pacing towards the milking-pen. A white tent, recessed in the lap of the hill, and the words of welcome issuing from its parted drapery recalled my attention, and I truly answered to eager questions, "I like this sunny wild, and am content to build me a home in Eagle Pass."

MY NEW COUNTRY.

VICTOR had spurred on before us to announce our coming, and the board was spread with hospitable cheer when we arrived; but the fragrant coffee, delicate kid, and fresh honey, with other less considered dainties, had to wait until we had taken a long draught of the pure air, and feasted on the prospect from the summit of the hill. Somehow Eagle Pass is less beautiful to my eye now, though it has all the airs and graces of a two year old village, than it was in its wildness, with its one white tent nestling, like a dove at rest, in the cool and quiet hill-nook. A lady, its mistress, was hoped for rather than actually expected; but an inner apartment had been hastily prepared for her reception. It was lined with printed muslin, of a pale, clear blue running pattern, and its pointed ceiling was freshly wreathed with verdant branches. Some stools and travelling boxes, cushioned and covered to match, served as ottomans, and gave an air of repose, and even elegance, to this temporary abode. The light stole in, tinted and softened, through the floating curtains, and harmonized well with the tranquil hush of the place. Mr. C. had been thought rash in thus planting his home—for this house of canvas was soon to be replaced by

one of stone—so far from any other residence, and the more so, as he had in the frail tenement, goods to an amount calculated to tempt Mexican robbers, if not a regular Indian foray; but he was not to be turned from his way. Fort Duncan was two miles farther up the river, but it was a mere infantry encampment, and so stinted by government in men and officers, that they were hardly strong enough to take care of themselves, and was then, as it is now, at the mercy of the Camanches any bright day it might please those respectable red gentlemen to muster for the extermination of that important sentinel post. The reputation of the United States—not the reality of its care—has been the protection of this commercial depot. We have lived and prospered under the shadow of what Fort Duncan ought to be, and so peace and good-will to political shadows evermore.

Victor, who watches every movement, and seems most anxious to understand and serve aright his new mistress, ventured a timid and respectful query as to my contentment with the place. I answered that it was better than I had hoped, for the current voice was against it as the driest and least beautiful section in Texas; yet it was evidently capable of becoming as lovely as it was undeniably healthy. Thereupon Victor, who is a very Cicero in his round and swelling periods, began to contrast this wilderness with his own gorgeous and fruit-crowned Guadalaxara, and the magnificent scenery of Tehuantepec, where fruits and flowers chase each other in endless succession through the round year. It is true Heaven has given Mexico everything but stable laws; but that one default cankers and poisons all the rest. We have on this side of the river the anchor of firm freedom, and by that we can outride the roughest weather. It is true that even here the breadth of the Bravo river—about as wide as the Hudson at Troy—separates the Americans from a much

finer country than they possess on this side; yet while that paradise of natural beauty remains unpopulated, insecure, and waste, a fair and prosperous settlement will rise in wealth, strength, and security—is rapidly rising, in fact—under the wings of our Eagle. A year has made this hope a realized and permanent existence; but for a time my home was established nearer to, and a little above, the fort, as the destined town of Eagle Pass had not then planted a stake, or laid a stone towards human accommodation. The spacious double tent, pitched by Mr. C., and his temporary corrals for his stock, were all that existed of the prospective town in the spring of 1850. Above the camp, and opposite the military colony of Piedras Negras, on the Mexican shore, a neat cottage had been called into existence for my use, until we could build below. It lacked some finishing touches when I arrived, and a tent near it was my home for a week or two. Under its folds I passed in sound repose the first night of my pleasant sojourn on the border—a calm, contented, indolent period, which I shall always remember as a sweet, half-waking dream of fairy-land.

Yet my first mornings were as full of keen inquiry as if I was in search of diamond fields or gold mines. Wherever I am, I like to know the features, character, and capabilities of the region; what it has done, and what it can do, though I am too idle and indifferent to turn anything to my own profitable account.

CAPABILITIES.

UNLESS a fair division of my private means may enable me (as I sometimes fondly dream) to establish a missionary manual labor school to be in part supported by it, I shall

never be personally interested in sugar culture, yet I was not the less curious to verify the capabilities of our vicinity for the growth of the cane. In the watered glens, and on the vast plains susceptible of cheap irrigation—an admirable aid to agriculture, yet almost unpractised in the United States—the sugar cane succeeds perfectly. But these sugar lands are almost entirely on the Mexican side of the river; though, on this side, we can have profitable crops of melon sugar—at least, I have a hopeful faith in this new feature of American production. The soil and climate is adapted to the vine family. The Texan flora shows a great variety of climbing plants, and the success of the grape has been conspicuous wherever attempted. Above us, at El Paso, and below us again, in the Parras district, the juice of the grapes of the country is absolutely unequalled by any known in the world, although as yet wine and raisins are not made at either in a regular and proper method. Our situation ensures that at no distant day these uninhabited wastes will echo the merry vintage songs of the distant Rhine. There is no harvest more productive than the purple grape in any favorable climate, and this is eminently propitious to wine culture. To the grape and melon sugar, we may add the castor bean as another production suited to this region in a peculiar degree; only that whoever enters into it must bring out the needful apparatus, for machinery and machinists are crying wants throughout the upper valley of the Bravo. In all the finest wheat regions, there is not a single mill that turns out bolted flour. The bran and the white heart of the grain is all given back together to the customer, duly and inseparably mixed in a way that would be balm to the heart of the health-apostle Graham.

The mining region enfolds us on almost every side. The Indians are slowly retiring from the silver and copper region

that comes down from the Gila, and hems between its lofty mountain walls hundreds of miles of the Bravo, even to the Painted Rocks (Piedras Pintas), scarcely a day's ride from Eagle Pass. Just beyond these the Indian traditions tell of valleys seamed with rich veins of gold, and of the outlines of ruined cities once occupied by an unknown and vanished race. Indeed, all geological analogies indicate the presence of rich ores near us. Coal we know exists at our door. A fine bed crops out on the bank of the river opposite the upper line of Eagle Pass; and the settlement near Fort Duncan takes its name, Piedras Negras (Black Stones), from the masses of the coal detached and cast along the margin of the river in high freshets. These "black diamonds" may be worth more to us here, at the probable head of navigation, for the steamers which must wend down a thousand miles of crooked channel, than the silver, lead, zinc, tin, fire-proof mica, or even the gold mines, which are now springing to light. Without any of them, we would still have a pure atmosphere, corn and milk, wine and fruits, wool and honey, and with these one should not fail of content and independence, if the elements of either are in his heart.

MY NEW FAMILY.

I FOUND a numerous and well-disposed family had been assembled with affectionate care to welcome me to Eagle Pass, and make me feel that I could still enjoy most of my old habitudes in this remote border. I lost no time in establishing myself on cordial terms with them all, and most particularly with my handmaiden-Francesca and her husband, Fabiano, who is an excellent factotum general. It is the best answer that can be made to the maligners of poor, weak,

abused human nature, to take an average character—one that evil circumstances has not utterly perverted, and is, moreover, endowed with average sense and kindliness—and try fairly the effects of equitable treatment. By equitable treatment I neither mean capricious petting, nor what some very excellent people call a “regular system of dealing with them,” if this regularity is to be as cold and hard as a block of granite. The golden rule of our divine example is good enough for me—if I could but live up to it—and that is my plain and simple law, although nearly everybody has a better law for servants, and laughs at my oddity in thinking He of Nazareth laid it down in earnest as a rule for genteel people to walk by in real life.

The morning after my arrival at Piedras Negras the drapery of my tent was lifted, and almost without my knowing how, a Mexican woman stood before me in respectful silence. Her large, patient black eye was bent on me as if in mute request to be noticed, but her whole attitude was as fixed and motionless as a statue, and looked as if it might remain so for all time if it did not please me to speak and set the machine in motion. I scanned her face steadily for a moment, and then gave it a degree of confidence which has been abundantly justified by her after conduct. It wore the sad, submissive, much-enduring expression of her race, yet withal there was something so trusting in those melancholy eyes that they won trust in return; and a grain or two of mutual confidence is a pleasant capital to begin with in a new family.

“Your name?” I inquired, for I knew not even that much about my new domestics. “Francesca, with your permission, and always at your service, my lady.” In common with the Arabs, their cousins, and the wild Indians, their brothers, the Mexicans, even of the lowest rank, are wonderfully rich in courtly and poetical phrases.

"Well, Francesca, can you take charge of the chamber-work for me?" Francesca made a timid, glancing survey of the tent. The plain outsides of several trunks and the pile of blankets that composed our travelling bed did not look very formidable or complicated, yet, in a slightly hesitating tone, like one slow to assume a weighty responsibility, she replied :

"If it is your command, señora." The poor girl *had* once in her life slept on a mattress and seen somewhat of household gear, as I learned in time to my great comfort, but I was prepared to find her ignorant of the uses of any bed or bed furniture beyond a blanket, for that is the case with nine-tenths of the poorer Mexicans.

"Can you sew?" "Si, señora."

This was asserted with cheerful promptitude, as if she now touched known and firm ground. But, poor Francesca, your first needle-work *was* indeed extraordinary. Encouraged by this, I ventured on another of my habitual requirements, and here I must remark that the most thoroughly valuable personal attendant I ever had, or, indeed, ever knew in any lady's service, was a Spanish-American girl.

"Can you dress hair?"

This was an overwhelming question. Francesca put her hand to her own head, and then looked at mine, with a comical, half-frightened bewilderment, as if to inquire which head she was expected to cultivate. At last she stammered out that universal phrase of refuge with the Mexicans, "*Quien sabe?*" Who knows? I saw that ~~was~~ a hopeless quest, and passed abruptly to the consideration of the well-being of another portion of my family.

"Are you accustomed to the ~~care~~ of fowls and pigeons?"

If Francesca was alarmed at the idea of assisting at my toilette, she was yet more puzzled to understand my interest

in the feathered tribe, and there peeped out of her widening eyes a sort of vague fear that my inquiries about her capacity for needle-work and taking care of the feathered tribe had some connection with each other, and possibly had reference to a charitable design on my part of making clothes for them. If, in fact, such a fancy had entered my head, it would never come into hers to manifest any other feeling than a patient desire to obey my wishes; so, of course, I only received the invariably peon response to all questions and commands, possible and impossible of fulfilment.

“If you command it, señora.”

To relieve her perplexity I stayed, for the time, all farther questions on her capacity for general usefulness, and directed her to put the tent in better order, by way of practical trial. She went out and gathered a handful of shrubs, tied them into a broom, and swept the floor, while I wandered out to look at the river, whose high, gravelly, treeless banks and scant fringe of herbage—for this is its character just there—was new to me and close at hand. It did not detain me long—this half barren, yet not unpicturesque, scenery—and when I returned I found my raw recruit waiting for my approval with a quiet air of “I have done well” consciousness that was really comfortable to look upon.

A BORDER CHAMBERMAID.

A ROUGH box, in which effects had been transported, had served, with a white cloth thrown over it, for an impromptu dressing-table. This cloth Francesca has carefully removed and piled up on the box, with all the carpet-bags and blankets that had to do duty for us in the place of chairs. Among these she had snugly folded in the wash-hand basin, out of

harm's way, and laid in it as daintily as a cradled babe, my bonnet, only that its fair proportions were somewhat marred by laying on it again a heavy, bright-colored horse blanket, which, like the genuine Indian she is, the woman thought the choicest article in that crowd, and treated accordingly to the most honored place. My dressing-case chanced to be standing open on the ground, and open on the ground she was most particular to leave it, only in addition to its usual trimmings she had contrived to put in my watch, my husband's spurs and bullet-pouch, and as much other small gear as she found in circulation in those quarters. We made some slight changes in our household arrangements, and parted for the day, pretty well satisfied with each other; and now, after some months of mutual instruction, we come on together admirably.

This is a specimen, and those who have not succeeded so well will tell you a favorable specimen, of the Mexican border servants. But I still insist that this obedient, passive race have in them the elements of good service for whoever will have the forbearance to be good masters. They are wayward as children, and have much of the singular unteachableness of the unconquered tribes of their race, but they are willing to learn where they like the teacher, and they *can* learn if properly taught.

In the afternoon I walked down to the little ravine in which Fabiano and his wife had their tent, and found it, like most of the Mexican homes, as bare of every comfort as an Indian hut. They are much the same thing, in fact. Some rude cover of reeds and grass, or hides and branches, to fend off the extremities of the climate; a hide and a blanket for bed, table, chair, and all other household furniture; a coarse bag, made of woven grass or the all-useful *pita* of the country, and sometimes a box as well as a bag, to hold their brief

inventory of clothes and valuables; a gourd or two, and a kettle to cook in, out of which they also eat; this is what you will find in a Camanche camp, and you will rarely find more than this in the possession of a peon family.

Francesca was sitting just within the entrance of the tent—calmly and meditatively smoking in the midst of a very sociable and contented family—when we caught the first glimpse of it, and we paused to take, unobserved, a more deliberate survey. A large, fawn-colored turkey was strutting in and out in search of his mate, or something to eat, and saying a great deal I could not understand, as I am not learned in turkish, to a demure duck that was couched down close at her side, and apparently as much occupied with his own reflections as Francesca. This duck is a forlorn bachelor, and has attached himself most Platonically to his human mistress, whom he follows about like a pet dog, and never goes to sleep until she retires, when he squats down at her feet, to be ready to attend her the moment she wakes. He gave himself no more trouble about the discontent of Sir Turkey than Brother Jonathan does for the authority of the Mosquito king, or the irregular murder of our people in Cuba. A beautiful spotted hen was gathering up her chicks on the other side of the tent, in which they were all as much at home as Francesca herself, while a pair of white pigeons were running to and fro, building a nest in some invisible corner, and, like all the rest of my feathered friends, evidently on terms of the closest intimacy with my docile, if not accomplished, chambermaid. This scene settled her position securely as a member of my establishment, for these were my pets, and valued above all my Eagle Pass possessions. The pigs were useful in their way, but they ~~were~~ were pert and forever putting themselves disagreeably forward, as the vulgar will do everywhere, and besides that, pigs can take care of themselves all the

year, and ask no favors; the cows, though respectable and inoffensive—as such well-to-do personages ought to be—were dull; but the graceful, bustling, capricious plumed aristocracy of idlers are always charming. They have as much variety of character, and are as full of small broils and petty emulations, as the majority of human-kind. Their tricks and rivalries, their friendships and their quarrels, are, if you watch them as closely, fully as sensible and quite as entertaining as those of common neighborhood gossip. They are of the same real value at last, and as their miffs and scandals are not near so mischievous to each other, or so tiresome to me, as those of the unplumed human bipeds, I would always rather give my attention to their ways than hear Mrs. Snooks' criticism on Mrs. Smith's last lace, last party, or last flirtation.

A pair of fawns shared my attentions with a pair of enormous white geese, who are a perfect pattern of conjugality, by the way, and absolutely worth setting up as an example of loving kindness to all others in the yoke of matrimony. An array of parti-colored goats and swarms of gentle lambs and kids came to replace the loss when my last fawn died—as too many children do—of over-feeding; but I have turned them all in charge of our shepherd, as I look forward to the luxury of fruits and flowers in this favorable clime, and they are things not likely to flourish in the range of the four-footed class of favorites. For this reason I limit my special household intimacy to my feathered pets, but they are quite sufficient to make me forget that we have here a small population and limited social circle.

OUR PEON SERVANTS.

I HAD wished to examine impartially the workings of the peon system of servitude here on its rugged border edge, where we can track it freely in its incomings and outgoings; and truly fate has gone beyond my wishes, for I find that nearly all our servants are runaways from debt-slavery. Victor, our spoiled man of all work, is a freeman born, and, moreover, a full-fledged citizen of the United States; but that does not prevent a Mexican, who has a claim against him, from coming about the place and threatening him with servitude. The old, petulant, gray-beard of a creditor talks as fluently of selling a citizen of the United States and a voter of our new-born county of Kinney as if a citizen and a voter of this glorious Union were of less account than his ragged skeleton of a pony. In fact, it is for a part of the purchase money of another such a ten dollar affair as he rides, that the gray-beard intends to sell Victor into peon slavery. There are plenty of men, whom it would be a scandal to well-behaved ponies to compare in value to a horse, but our Victor has such a mint of useless accomplishments, and some useful ones, withal—if they were ever at hand when wanted—it would be a shame to rate him at the fourth part of this starved and ill-gaited thing. If that is the way voting citizens stand in this market, it is not worth while for Women's Rights Conventions any farther to reduce their market rates by bringing in the softer sex. If they can induce the American cabinet to define positions with Mexico, and secure American womankind from being sold for debt into life-long servitude, it would be a surer and clearer gain. If they fancy this is a visionary dread they are mistaken. American citizens *can* be, American citizens *have been* enslaved for debt

in Mexico. So have French and English subjects been enslaved. One of the born subjects of Victoria, who was the bound peon of Señor Rafael Aldapa, of Santa Rosa, our neighbor—the Santa Rosa of the silver mines—ran away from his master this season, because the luxurious fellow thought a peck and a half of corn a week, without meat or salt, poor living. Some people are never pleased, and he was one of them; he objected to the allowance of pure and healthy diet provided by law, and he objected also to the bracing exercise of the whipping-post, and left them both behind him. Equally unreasonable, Victor is not at all in a hurry to succeed him in these luxuries; and if he is prudent, he will not trust to his citizenship or his government, but make haste to settle his accounts with his importunate creditor, and keep the while near home. One of our shepherds is here by license of his master, and is laying aside half of his wages, month by month, to pay up the debt. He has left in pledge the most sacred security an Indian can give—the persons of his aged father and mother. Filial love is a deep-enduring trait in the Mexican character, and a beautiful, redeeming light, it throws on some of its darker shades. I have seen a strong man in the prime of life stand, in mute submission under a perfect hail-storm of invectives, aye, and hard blows as well, from his angry mother, without even offering to move out of her reach, and only attempting to avert the storm of her wrath by tender and respectful signs of deprecation and obedience. A rude and unkind child is a sort of monster in Mexican eyes, and with all the faults inevitable to an oppressed and untaught people, they are faithful through life to their parents. On this Domingo's master built his trust, and as he had no use for his services, and the peon market was dull, he took the old people in pledge, and suffered his serf to come over among the Americans and earn

wherewith to buy his liberty. Faithfully is one half of his wages remitted to the master, and something taken from the remaining half to send in loving tokens to his parents; and then he is so grateful and happy when some little gift is added to his own well-earned offerings, that it is a delight to contribute a trifle.

FABIANO.

Of all our people I am most puzzled to understand our quiet, attentive, sensible Fabian, who comprehends at a glance all that concerns his duty, and meets every requirement with such intelligent promptitude, yet flutters like a wounded bird if you question him touching his former life. He is small, yet well knit, and as quick, active and observant as a cat. When in attendance, his eye is alert to catch the slightest movement, and you hardly look at what you want before it is already at hand. He is a devoted husband withal, and as anxious to help his wife, and as eager to cover the defects in her service by his own extra toil, as if his cherished one was an angel of beauty. Poor Francesca is no such thing. She is a clumsy, heavy, full-blooded Indian woman, and much older, as well as much larger, than Fabian, so that in everything she has the weight on her side. Yet she is not wanting in wit, and is, with all her slow ways, the terror of the whole establishment for her keen, unsparing sarcasms. Our herdsman Francisco, who is also a character in his way, is the only one of the dozen or twenty men about us who does not stand in awe of her tongue, and what a rushing, rolling cataract of resounding words they do pour forth when they enter into one of their discussions over the long-drawn-out Sunday breakfasts. The echo floats up to my chamber with the murmur of the river rapids, and for an hour or two

they will flow on unceasingly and undistinguishably together. Fabiano listens in tranquil silence, perfectly convinced that his better half will triumph in the end over even the voluble herdsman. Still, by no chance does she let fall any clue to the latter years—the years of her married life. Fabian was from Monterey, but that was a long time ago, and it is amusing to observe how adroitly the pair veil their after residence; yet with all their precautions, chance—that sleepless mischief-maker—has told their story:—*They are runaway peons; fugitives from slavery for debt.*

Fabiano was a free-born Indian—with a dash of white blood I think—of Monterey, and drifted this way in the service of one master and another as far as San Juan—the town dedicated to that San Juan who has in charge the best peaches, figs and grapes within a radius of thirty leagues around us. Here it was his destiny to meet a lost wife, or to lose his heart anew to Francesca, who had been sold while a child by her parents to a citizen of Monterey, and had moved to San Juan with her master's family. Her master forbade his precincts to the pertinacious lover, but Fabian was not to be forbidden. He continued to roam about the house by day and night, to snatch brief interviews with his loved Francesca. The laws of the republic, which a wise and illustrious senator quoted in Congress as a "bright model of pure liberty worthy of our imitation," permits whipping, imprisonment, and the like gentle persuasives to industry, to the masters of peons, and the master of Francesca made large use of his legal rights. By the way, would it not be well for those members of Congress who believe in this example, to propose the enactment in their respective states of the Mexican debtor law, and to allow employers to whip, starve, and send to jail, those whose labors are unsatisfactory? Will not the factory-girls of New England petition for the intro-

duction of the laws of that purely free Mexico, to whose "soil undefiled by slavery," such profuse libations are poured out by their profound and patriotic members of Congress?

Well, Francesca, who boasts the best Indian blood of the state, felt the inexorable lash, and every blow cut to the loving heart of Fabian. He plead for instant flight across the Rio Grande. Under the stars of the Union there is no slavery for debt, and whatever else happened, the Red Race went free from bondage on that portion of their native inheritance.

It was so arranged, and Fabian was hovering about the house watching for the favorable moment of flight, when he was discovered and arrested by Francesca's master. To throw him in prison, make formal complaint to the Alcalde, and prepare a list of costs on which he could legally be made a debtor and peon, was a thing of course. This peril Fabian had looked in the face, and prepared for beforehand. He had his friends without, and within accomplices are easily gained in prisons. A few days of bitter agony about his companion, for he could guess, but not know, the measure of punishment that awaited Francesca, and then all around him fell back into careless, unwatched neglect. While the master was listlessly smoking his cigar, and perhaps mistily coming to a decision how and when he would turn his new peon into ready money, Fabian and his prison mates forced the unguarded door, and sped across the uninhabited fields to the Bravo. But not for himself alone had Fabian dared the risk; his fleet and hardy mustang bore away Francesca too, and when, hungry and exhausted, their worn-out horse sunk under them on the banks of the wished-for river, each was the other's only earthly possession. There Victor, who was in quest of a cook and chambermaid

to meet my arrival, stumbled upon them, and inducted them in due form in my service.

MY NEW HOUSE.

TEN days after my arrival on the Bravo, my house—the first, and then only, habitation with glass windows and panelled doors in this young island of civilization—was in a state to receive us, and with no small importance we went into possession. The large symmetrical sashed doors gave our cottage in the wilderness a cheerful, lightsome appearance, and it seemed to look out upon the desert hills, and lonely, untravelled river, with a wide-awake, astonished air of inquiry into the wherefore of its position. We had a house then, but no furniture; some was exploring its way to Eagle Pass at our order, and in the course of time was likely to find its destination; but—meanwhile? In these improved times furniture is difficult of attainment at Eagle Pass, for we are still destitute of skilled mechanical labor, though the caricature thereof by Mexican hands does exist, but in the ancient days of this settlement, that is to say, fifteen months ago, a suite of decent movables was but a flattering dream. It might come to pass at some dim far-away period of the future, but the chances were not in its favor. There was, however, a resource open to us, and, thanks to some border experience, we soon made it available. A wide, shallow box was raised on some very strong, if not elegantly carved, feet, and there was a table. With a white cloth, our breakfast-tray did not make a bad figure on it, and covered with a bright blanket, it did duty as a centre-table. A side-board, out of a large, square box, with a shelf in it, and curtained with a high-colored French print, and a lounge to match, was soon created, together with a stand and dressing-table *en suite*, as

people are particular to say of their carved rosewood Louis Quatorze *ameublements*. Ours flashed out with a dashing air of pretension that would be quite unbearable in mere rosewood and mahogany, and I felt in my heart all the pride and self-satisfaction the creations of our handiwork carried in their faces. I had never before given much thought to the adornment of person or house, beyond the essentials of comfort and propriety, but now that I had found how much could be done with calico and old boxes, the tape, tacks, and tack-hammer were never out of my hands for the first two or three weeks. I am not sure whether, in the exuberance of my vanity and delight, I did not take them to sleep with me, and, at any rate, I am certain that when my New York made furniture did arrive, it was received in the family with as much contemptuous indifference as an expletive, third cousin from the country. What was it in comparison to the dear offspring of our love?

GARDENING.

THE next engrossing object of ambition was a garden, but in that all my efforts were foiled, all my aspirations doomed to disappointment. I tried vines, they only sprung from the ground to wilt and die; I tried flowers, they would not spring at all; I tried vegetables, they only raised their heads in green promise to grow sick and die, or be eaten off by the rats. The soil about Fort Duncan, and the little settlement above in which our pioneer tent was pitched, is a high bank of sand and gravel, and seems but lately upheaved in some Plutonic throe. Gardens can be made almost any where under this sky, if the soil is patiently fertilized and watered; even on the sterile spot that encircles Fort Duncan. This is stated advisedly, for I noted carefully the progress of the

only crop raised there as yet—a single bean, an enormous red giant of the family of running beans. It was brought out and presented by me to our neighbor, and was regularly watered on the alternate days, or thereabouts, and carefully tended always. This crop of one bean had a prodigious growth, and produced fifty fold, but then a man and team were necessary to cultivate it properly, and it certainly occupied more time and industry than will be given to these leaves, so that it becomes a fair question in productive economy whether this book is worth a bean, and also whether that bean was worth the cost of cultivation.

My horticultural failures were the more dispiriting from the perfect success of the family at Eagle Pass—there was then but one family at the county seat, three miles below Fort Duncan, and that one lived in a tent, not having been there long enough to put up a house, though they had made haste and fenced in a garden.

Mr. Campbell was one of those open-handed Christians, whose principal joy is to share out whatever good things of this life fall to his lot, and his garden at Eagle Pass gladdened all the tables of the settlement as fully and liberally as his own. The towns on the Mexican side sent in their contribution of green corn, sweet potatoes, monster onions, yellow plums, peaches, quinces, apples and figs, but with such provoking irregularity, that we were more than ready to listen to Mr. Campbell's advice, and choose our homestead where we could plant orchards for ourselves. Others went down to Eagle Pass to settle opposite the Escondida for commercial reasons; because it was on the right side of the fords and paths precious to contrabandists, and because it lay in better vicinity to the semicircle of Mexican towns that spread their arc in front of it, and radiate trade into the mining districts beyond them; but the reasons that moved me thereto were of

less solid nature. I pined for shade, and fruit trees whose over-arching arms should enfold me in a temple of tranquil repose. It is only under the shadow of living foliage that I can entirely possess myself and live—untrammelled by the tedious weight of society—with my thoughts, my books, and my birds. Gardening is with me an occupation and a delight, and I could not wait the slow outcomings of the ungrateful soil above Fort Duncan, neither was my good lord and master disposed to forego the fine fishing and bathing proffered by the Escondida, or any of us unmindful how far its clear waters were preferable for taste and health, to the turbid and often brackish current of the Río Bravo. The pecuniary interests we had planted on the dry gravel bank above the military post, were thrown overboard under the pressure of these considerations, and at an early day we rode down to select a site for our homestead and garden—and perhaps decide as well the exact location of the town of Eagle Pass.

CHINO.

BEFORE this was absolutely fixed upon, or rather as an important preliminary to any study of the country, I made it my particular business, after establishing friendly and well-defined relations with my servants, my pigeons and my poultry, to come to a perfect understanding with my black pony. Chino was a full-blooded, native-born citizen of Mexico, endowed, like his human peon brothers, with the Mexican virtues of patience, endurance, and abstemiousness, besides several other somewhat less creditable habitudes. He was sly, terribly inclined to petty larcenies, and at first rather addicted to shying off his burden, if the rider was not on the guard; but he always maintained a most demure and respectable countenance, and had such soft, well-bred ways

that he never suffered in his character. It is astonishing how many quiet, well-mannered sins that sage moralist, the world, will forgive to smooth-paced men and horses. Unfortunate circumstances educate too many of the youth of both classes into evil ways, and I imputed Chino's sly immoralities to cruel treatment in his colthood, and the use of that barbarous implement of horse torture, the Mexican bridle, which fills the poor animal's mouth with a load of jagged iron, to such an extent that he cannot drink with it, though the flowing river may lave the saddle skirts. The stoic Mexican, true to his Indian nature, endures suffering himself, in silent, passive fortitude, and he has no tenderness or sympathy for the sufferings of any thing else. The worst trait I have observed in them is this almost universal want of feeling for animals. I know society and Mrs. Grundy keep their keenest ridicule for the weakness of caring for the agonies of helpless and dependent beings. They were made to be abused and trampled upon, doubtless, and it is childish to pause in the important pursuits of life,—the set of a hat or the length of a skirt, for example,—to think of such trifles; but still I could wish the enslaved Red Man on our borders to share more largely in the genialities of life, if it were only that it might soften his heart to more kindness toward those things that feel and suffer below him on the ladder of existence.

When I ordered a light American bridle to replace the heavy, uncouth Mexican bit, Chino shook his head with a short, disdainful toss that spoke his mind as plain as a dictionary: "That smooth and slender bit of wire can't check me. I see I shall have my own way on the road."

Victor, who is now a fixture in the family, hinted a fear that Chino would have no respect to this new and gentle system of government, yet he seemed gratified, for he and Chino are intimate personal friends. When I assured him that I had

no fear about it, and should adopt it invariably, for I could not ride with pleasure while I knew my horse was in misery, Fabian, who was adjusting the girths, raised his great, sad Indian eyes in surprise that any person of sound mind could take so seriously the comfort of a horse, and to this day I suspect he and the rest of our Mexican family set down my determined aversion to Mexican bridles as a touch of harmless insanity. As for Chino, after satisfying himself on one or two occasions, that arguments of force really did lay in the American substitute, he yielded the point with an excellent grace, and thenceforth stepped off as I like my horse to step, lightly and cheerily, as if he was out for his own private pleasure, and carried me where I desired to go, out of pure good will, and a general disposition to oblige. This being amicably settled, as such things almost always may be, if the rider is not more perverse than the average of horses, Chino and I rambled about at will, and without much troubling ourselves about Indians or anything else; we explored together, with great mutual content, the grassy dells and tangled thickets around our home. In most cases it was, probably, the first time their silent shades had been disturbed by the visit of a white person, but we found many lovely nooks that well repaid my hermit tastes for the trouble of exploration.

THE MULBERRY GROVE.

It has been already explained that Eagle Pass is a two-headed child, with one face looking above and the other below Fort Duncan. Our new cottage and our first rest was in the upper place; but one delicious morning, about the middle of April, when the northern world is yet fretting at the chilly, frosty, changing weather, we rode down the green

tree-sprinkled terrace, between hill and river, to examine more closely the advantages of the elder Eagle Pass ; that old, official Eagle Pass, whose name already boasted the venerable rust of three years' antiquity, while its young counterpart was but a new christened three months babe. As we cantered along, now glancing at the silver face of the Bravo, here about the width, depth and outline of the Hudson at Albany ; now admiring the leafy arcade that veils the bridal of the coy Escondida with the sullen and capricious Bravo, and again pausing to measure with a second look, the long fantastic arms of some far-reaching mesquite, we came all at once on a charming little grove of mulberry trees, laden with fruit and foliage, and drawn up in close company at the foot of the last terrace towards the river. We wheeled into it, and discovered, hid away like birds' nests under the cool, interlacing shade, a brace of Mexican tents, with a whole family of men, women and children humming and swarming around them, like bees stirred up at our unexpected advent. A wonderfully ragged and stately gentleman came promptly to my bridle rein, and proffered his services with the mien and language of an emperor. Indeed I doubt whether his crowned namesake of Brazil carries his honors with such a princely air as our adobe-maker Pedro does his tatters. I often marvel how such brevity of original material could be manufactured into this extensive showing of fluttering shreds. I am confident Pedro of Brazil could not get up such a display on the narrow limits of four or five yards of cotton ; yet Pedro of Eagle Pass did it with the easy self-possession of a finished aristocrat. Does this oriental grace of speech and bearing come to the Indian race by Asiatic descent ? It is not the gift of the white race. The peasantry of Europe have their poetry and their noble aspirations, but they have

it not in the form or in the wild plenitude which is common to the red race, whether bond or free. It is a part of their inheritance, with that wearisome *metate* before which this poor girl kneels and grinds her corn for bread, exactly as the handmaidens of Abraham's household ground theirs some thousand years ago. These are the "nether millstone" which scripture law made a household exemption from debt, and it is, I think, one of the first precedents on record ; but like the Puritans, who resolved to be governed by the laws of God "until they had time to make better," we have spent many centuries in amendments before we came round again to the simple justice of heaven. Just such round blocks, like a granite cheese set up on three little feet, are painted in the oldest tombs of Egypt, and by this time Layard has, doubtless, disentombed the like in the ruins of ancient Nineveh, but he may not know their uses if he has never seen America, and fancy they are the altars of the domestic Lares of the buried nations. Not exactly a wrong conclusion after all. Whether or not the Lost Ten Tribes, or the colonists of Sesostriis, brought the metate to America with the art of building with the huge sun-dried adobe, the same things have been common to them all ; only the daughters of Judea ground barley, and our native American girls, Indian-corn, to make the unleavened cakes called—I know not what in Asia—but here, *tortillas*.

DELICATE FARE.

PATIENT Barbara had just ground off one batch of dough, when our visit fell upon her, and electrified her spirit with hospitable visions. The lye-soaked corn was ready at her side, and she set about preparing another mess with more scrupulous nicety. The process attracted me, it was per-

formed with such quick and peculiar dexterity of hand. To bite out one by one the dark spot of every kernel of corn, just where it was set in the cob, would be slow work for the uninitiated, but our hostess of the mulberry grove kept her hands and teeth in action with the quickness and sleight of a practised biter. "Why take all this trouble, Barbara?" I inquired, after watching her a while.

"To make the tortillas clean and white, if you, my lady and mistress, (*mi ama y dueña*) will honor me by eating them," said Barbara, dropping the last kernel from her white teeth.

"To make the tortillas *clean* and white," I repeated. "Ah, yes, I understand now, but I cannot stay to eat, to-day; we absolutely must return home in time for dinner;" and I retreated to the overhanging branches of the mulberries, now in full fruit, and raining their purple wealth on the ground whenever the breeze swept their thick and rustling foliage. There, too, had been over much care for my entertainment. Eager to serve and to please, the children had made a rapid foray on the largest fruit, which they knew best of anybody where to find, and as I turned from the choicest of tortillas, I confronted a boy of some ten years, anxiously holding up to my acceptance a lap-full of the choicest mulberries. But that lap! At some foregone period it had been white cotton, at least there was something in its mixed complexion that hinted at such an origin, but time and the experiences of boyhood had invested it with a strength of tint rivalling in depth of color the berries which the polite owner was offering to my use. I was taken with a sudden disinclination to eat more berries before dinner, but not to wound the feelings of the little fellow who had taken this pains to please me, the berries were carried home with us,—a part of the way—and his exertions duly acknowledged with a piece of silver.

From that day, the mulberry-grove became the home of my heart, and when I leave it for another, whether it be on this side, or the other, of that gate which opens not to the returning traveller, I trust it may become the seat, or in some degree the helpful appanage, of a free mission or manual labor school, for the dispossessed but natural inheritors of this soil—the homeless and neglected children of the Red Race.

THE SEMINOLE CHIEF.

WE were sipping our chocolate, with every door thrown wide to welcome the breeze, which rarely denies us its rustling presence, when we were astonished to see Francesca coming up at a rapid pace. "What can this unexampled haste in our easy-paced handmaiden possibly mean? It has a portentous augury," thought we. In she came, so much excited as almost to let go her tenacious hold on the ever-present reboso, and pointed, too far gone for speech, towards the hills. We looked out in surprise, for there, emerging from the broken ground in a direction that we knew was untraversed by any but the wild and hostile Indians, came forth a long procession of horsemen. The sun flashed back from a mixed array of arms and barbaric gear, but as this unexpected army, which seemed to have dropped upon us from the skies, drew nearer it grew less formidable in apparent numbers, and opened upon us a more pacific aspect. Some reasonably well-mounted Indians circled round a dark nucleus of female riders, who seemed objects of special care. But the long straggling rear-guard was worth seeing. It threw Falstaff's ragged regiment altogether in the shade. Such an array of all manners and sizes of animals, mounted by all ages, sexes and sizes of negroes, piled up to a most bewildering height, on and among such a promiscuous assemblage of

blankets, babies, cooking utensils, and savage traps, in general, never were or could be held together on horseback by any beings on earth but themselves and their red brothers. The party began to break away and vanish into the little ravines that dip down to the river edge, and we understood by these signs they were encamping among us.

The word soon circulated that it was Wild Cat, the famous Seminole chief, who played fast and loose so long with our army in Florida, baffling adroitly the efforts of our best soldiers, and showing us many acute lessons in savage tactics, though we never had the wit to turn them to profit. His tribe had lands assigned them in Nebraska, the territory allowed, for the time, to the Indians who were driven or inveigled to come west of the Mississippi, by the relentless policy of the whites, but he has left them in discontent. He has won too much savage glory in his wars with the whites, and has in him too much of the restlessness of his race, to stay cooped up among government forts and agents, with no higher hope or employment than taking once a year a long brutal debauch, when the annual bounty for their lost inheritance is paid to his tribe. Wild Cat has turned his back on all this and come out to the Mexican border, with his immediate servants, followers and kinsmen, to find a home and a field more congenial to the heart of a Red warrior.

He came in state to make his call on us, attended by his cousin and lieutenant, the Crazy Bear, and some other braves, and marshalled with all ceremony by his interpreter, Gopher John, a full-blooded negro. John does not look as dishonest as his character runs, but might very well have earned his pre-name of "Gopher" in the way it is told of him. He was employed, so runs the story, by one of our gallant officers serving in Florida to supply and guard a reservoir of the kind of turtle called *gophers*, in the "Orange State." Every day

John presented himself with a fresh supply of the luxury, and receiving his stipulated silver therefor, consigned it to the reservoir. After some time it occurred to the officer as singular that his stock did not increase, as it ought with all these daily reinforcements. A watch was set, and then it came out that John stole back at night the gophers he sold the General in the morning. He took his detection very calmly, and has rather prided himself on the title of "Gopher" John, which was fixed upon him by that affair for life.

Wild Cat was dressed in fanciful Indian costume, but his whole attire had the rather un-Indian merit of neatness. A row of crescent-shaped silver medals, arranged in something like a breast-plate, glittered on his breast, and he had good arms. Perhaps he reads Byron, for not only he

"Shawl of red lightly round his temples wore,"

but the whole air and costume closely resembled one of the poet's favorites.

He saluted the ladies with a sedate and graceful bow, and accepted a chair with a grave dignity of attitude becoming a chief. He then directed his interpreter to say, he thanked the Great Spirit for placing him, face to face, and in peace, with the whites, whom he now regarded as friends and brothers, in this distant country. The conversation was continued on both sides in the same strain, and in every sentence and attitude there shone out the same impassive habit of self-command, and the same proud, inflexible spirit of self-reliance. On taking a glass with the gentlemen he gave a pledge indicative of a desire for mutual good-will, and added, afterwards, that once when he met white men, blood flowed, but now he had no thought in his heart but friendship and a desire for peace.

One of the ladies, not dreaming that his ignorance of our

language was but the politic feigning of the wily chieftain, remarked on the beauty and force of his language, the dignity of his bearing, and the probable insincerity of heart that kept it all company. Not a shade of look or manner betrayed that he comprehended a word of it, but we are now satisfied that Wild Cat can talk English fluently enough when it pleases him to find use for his tongue in that way.

His present role is that of a pacific and mediating leader, and if, as we suspect, all this is but acting a part, it must be confessed he plays it superbly, and while he chooses to sustain it nothing could surprise him out of this pre-determined calmness, and cold assumption of ignorance.

For six months he has been passing from tribe to tribe, along this extended frontier, as he says, to urge them to abstain from hostilities, and enter into peace-treaties with the whites. He has, with his band, suffered immense fatigue and privations, but no one can estimate the extent of the knowledge he has acquired of the border country, its passes, its capacity for forage, water, and all the items of savage attack and defence. A seven years' Indian war would not teach our white officers so much of what it is necessary to know, as this ambitious, far-reaching chief has laid up in this painful but effective six months' study. So, too, of the powers and dispositions of the long list of jarring Indian tribes in whose councils he mingled with the self-reliance of a renowned chief of their own lineage; what white man could learn as much, could he even speak their tongue, and think and reason in the habitudes of Indian life and sentiment?

Crazy Bear has more of the crude, imperfect savage in his logic and his aims than his chief, but he seems to believe in him, and follow him as the model, according to his Indian ideas, of all that is wise, heroic, and illustrious. Left to himself the Bear would kill any white man he met alone in the

forest with ferocious delight, because he hates the race, and feels that, whether in peace or war, the Red Race is alike dying under his heel. Yet on the morrow he would beg rum at the white man's door, and profess deceitful friendship; for his brutal appetites are strong, and he thinks all arts, even falsehood and treachery, are well used in spoiling and circumventing the enemy. Beyond the success of the moment he cannot stretch his eye, but Wild Cat is of loftier mould; he feels and bows to the triumph of the white man as to the inevitable decree of fate, and next to conquering the conqueror, his extended vision shows him that it would be wise to make terms and become the ally instead of the victim of this irresistible greatness.

With a grain of wise and liberal forecast, this aspiring savage could be made the soldier of the Union, and the surest and most invaluable defender of this frontier

THE CANE COTTAGE.

IN a few weeks after my first visit to the mulberry grove, I was delightfully established in a reed cottage under the thick-set canopy of foliage, exactly where we found Pedro's tent. The *metate* had given place to an extempore table for writing, embroidery, and a variety of other female helps to idleness, disguised in the form of work. This change was not an inapt expression of the difference of female life in patriarchal and city periods. Cities do not imply the highest possible civilization, though they are schools, and aids to it on its upward path, any more than patriarchal customs imply the highest moral good. The bread-making, blanket-weaving period, in which woman walks out her tread-mill round of life in mental torpor and laborious usefulness, reads well in Arcadian poetry, but it is not the purest nor the happiest.

Sacred history, in depicting a life not far removed in its main outlines from this we are witnessing on the border, gives us strong details of domestic strife, fraternal wars, neighborly deceit, and mutual injustice. Man was not high where woman was so low, and he cannot rise without taking woman with him.

But neither is the busy trifling of that we call refinement very much better; though it is more pleasant to the sight, as the gay tulip is fairer-looking than the rough-favored, but useful potato. It is only when society has shaped itself so as to expect service from all its members, when the fruit shall follow the flower, and graceful adornment keep time with solid utility, that woman and civilization can be admitted to have found a position of value. Hard-working Barbara, who cooks and washes for her hard-working mate; bustling Martha, who makes pickles and preserves to help out the fussy hospitality of hers, who, in turn, lives perhaps by thrusting himself between producer and consumer, and leeches from their industry what supports his non-producing existence; exquisite Madalina, who touches the harp, out-paints nature, and out-perfumes the rose, the tulip ornament of the ball and promenade, are neither of them more than the third part of the complete woman of complete civilization.

Frances, seated on the ground, pretending to sew, beside Barbara, while her companion is crushing the lye-softened corn under that ceaseless roller, inspired me with all these philosophical ideas—that is, if I have not borrowed them of somebody and forgotten where to return them—for surely the three women who now live under the shade of this grove do not altogether perform what one should do, and could do, under better arrangements in the duty assigned to human kind as the inheritor of the world's dominion. The condition of the gift is to “subdue the earth.”

A comprehensive phrase, and with its corresponding condition, that labor is man's lot, clearly implies that all the descendants of Adam are bound to aid in bringing forth the beauty and the riches of their earthly estates and stewardship.

All this has very remote application to the building of our house of reeds, yet that is worth some notice for its simplicity. This class of shelters—house is rather an assuming word, and a mere hovel it is not—is common in all the rich sequestered valleys of Mexico, and has the merit of demanding no heavier machinery in the construction than an Indian's knife. In the magnificent and enchanting vales of Tehuantepec, two or three of the natives will build one in a day, without a nail or the sound of a hammer. Here the material is not so excellent or abundant, and it required about three days to bring the wherewithal from the river side, and construct a weather-proof apartment of something like twelve by twenty feet. Some upright forks are cut and set in the ground to receive light cross-poles for the roof. To the uprights are lashed long reeds with threads of *pita*, both growing spontaneously and ready for use all about us: the cane in the low borders of the river, and the *pita* on the driest ridges. The *pita* bears in March and April a splendid cone of creamy flowers in the centre of its cluster of evergreen leaves. These leaves, slightly scorched by a slow fire, break into strong and durable threads a yard long, and with the tall golden reeds, make excellent building materials for summer houses and a vast variety of garden architecture. My cottage resembled an enormous bird-cage; the light and air streaming through its lattice-work, at will; or shut out, when desired, by curtains lining the inside. This roof, however, was rather too open to the rain, even with the help of the flexile mulberry boughs that interlaced above and around it; so a light

thatching of a kind of long, broad-leaved grass, was laid upon it, and held in its place by another course of reeds tied across and to the inner basket-work. A cooler, fresher, and more picturesque abode I never expect to inhabit, and all was nature's unbought gift.

Pedro and his wife Barbara, whom we displaced, receded to the verge of the grove on one side, and Fabian and his wife were disposed in a temporary kitchen and dining-room, under another clump of trees opposite, and thus within call on either hand, the triple family sit down, each portion under its own shade trees, in contented sociability.

OUR FLAG INSULTED.

OUR little ark in the ocean of solitude has been stained with crime. The blackness of the peon iniquity is overflowing upon us, and we are too weak and inert to dash back or dyke out the hateful tide.

It comes, too, in the form of a daring insult to our flag; an open high-handed violation of our laws; a noonday invasion of our soil; and all this in the sight and hearing of one of our military posts, in the presence of one of its officers, and yet no man had the manhood to hinder the perpetrators. A quiet and peaceful resident, on the American side of the river, is passing his day of rest in the settlement above Fort Duncan, and, while he is on the highway passing about his own affairs, he is pounced upon by the birds of prey. He is not accused of any crime, he is guiltless of every form of offence against the laws of the United States, but he is accused of owing somebody in Mexico, and their agents—bold in the sufferance of our government, and the countenance and aid of a few miscreants who deal in kidnapping—have not scrupled to set our flag at defiance, and come on our soil to

seize their victims, and bear them off to peon bondage. There is a foreigner, who partly makes a public brokerage of it—a sort of general dealer in—cards, calico, cheap rum and kidnapping—who drives his trade in men, without scruple or disguise, under the very eye of Fort Duncan; for felonies do not spoil his reception there, nor prevent other men who make resounding professions of superlative honesty, from helping him, in this brave sport of hunting down debtors for the slave market. They course down, like bloodhounds, the poor helpless peons, that have fled to our soil for refuge. These gallant souls would not face a real danger so freely, but it is gay sport to intercept a frightened fugitive, keep him from defence while they hold—miracles of valor that they are—pistols to the breast of the stricken peon, and tie his hands, and take him to the ferry to cross him over into Mexico, to the debt-penalty of a prison, stripes, and slavery. This was done while the drums of Fort Duncan were beating their martial assurance of safety, in notes fraught, as our children are taught to believe, with amplest protection for our citizens, our soil, our laws, and our national honor!

One Sunday was marked by three such deeds, equally cowardly, cruel, and defiant of our laws against kidnapping. On that day three peons were caught, bound, and carried by lawless force from our soil. One was a woman, a slave for no debt of her own, but seized and peonized for the expenses of her father's death and funeral. She had served years, scantily fed and worse clothed, until, wearied of her miserable condition and hopeless of any change there, she escaped from Mexico, and hived out on our side of the Bravo. She was soon tracked, and, as our laws stand for naught, hurried back to bondage without ceremony. *And, if either of these reclaimed peon slaves had been American citizens, their fate would have been the same.* This will startle the slavery hat-

invasion by these lawless Mexicans. Thus far we had seen no example of this hoped-for border protection, and some said even then that the Government which permitted our citizens to be plundered and maltreated, as they had been at Tehuantepec and other parts of Mexico, would take it very lightly if the Mexicans came a step farther, and carried us off of our own soil to deal out their pleasure on us in Mexico. However, the memorial went on to Washington, and after a time there came this very luminous and logical reply from the Department of State. If it emanated from a less renowned head than that of the "foremost lawyer of the age," one might venture to say that it is as weak in its legal positions as it is imbecile in its patriotism and false in its statesmanship. I have put in italics the closing sentence; but aside from this, here is an exact copy of this extraordinary

CABINET LETTER.

"DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, }
17th December, 1850. }

"SIR—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th ultimo, with the accompanying papers relative to the abduction of Manuel Rios, from Eagle Pass, in Texas, in September last, by Dennis Meade, of Piedras Negras, in Mexico, who claimed the services of Rios, as a Peon, under the law of the Mexican Republic.

"As it does not appear that any officer of that Republic was concerned in the abduction, the case is not one which would warrant an application to the Mexican Government. If, however, Mr. Meade should have violated any law of the State of Texas, the authorities of that State can cause him to be prosecuted therefor whenever he may be found within their jurisdiction. *If also Rios should assert that he is wrong-*

His blindly loved Saloma shared his flight, and her unwifelike boast that she was free and could go back to San Juan, and be happy whether her husband was peon or not, as well as the exaggerated value which she placed upon the simple act of following her husband's fortunes, gave me very early an unpleasant insight into her flippant and selfish nature. Poor Manuel Rios held no such opinions of his angel. In his eyes she was the perfection of grace, goodness, and devotion. In the still softness of the summer nights I was often an amused listener, when their social circle gathered round the prolonged supper, and all the gossip and witticism of their class were in circulation, and never failed to observe how like the needle to the pole, his thoughts always trembled back to the slight, talkative thing at his side. While her workmate, our gentle, patient, industrious Barbara, had no eyes, ears, heart or happiness, that did not cling to and enfold her ragged, stately, kind, but—ah, me! for poor, weak, wicked human nature—most inconstant Pedro: the loving, confiding Manuel fixed his steadfast worship in the same way, on a false and wandering object. Even in their lowly orbit the serpent, Deceit, made his entrance.

This traffic in debt and bondage is an eternal premium to falsehood and treachery; it rusts and corrodes every bond of love and confidence, as a pestilential vapor eats away and blackens precious steel-work. It is the social demon of Mexico.

One Saturday evening, after the work of the day was over, and all the people were clustered round their supper in the open air, enjoying the transparent freshness of the sunset breeze, for which this climate is remarkable, I observed a stranger in the circle. I was told it was the father of Saloma; and therefore did not think it remarkable that, while her husband Manuel went to the river with the horses, they

drew apart, and engaged in confidential and whispered conversation. They stood close to the reed basket-work of my cottage, and I retired from that side, not to play the listener to family secrets. In the morning, Manuel asked for some money in advance; and, although it is not wise to indulge these untaught and unreflecting children in embarrassing themselves, there was such pressing need of apparel, that in part he obtained his wish. Saloma was full of glee, and eager to set out for the camp above, to obtain, as we thought, muslin from the suttler's store, for a new dress. I little dreamed that her impatience was to obtain the price of her husband's blood. Some of our people, suspicious, by bitter experience, of the temptations and facilities to this kind of domestic treason, had watched and overheard enough to believe that the errand of Saloma's father was to inveigle Manuel back to bondage. Saloma engaged to lure him from the precincts of our place—for there a kidnapper dared not come—and deliver him into the hands of his master somewhere about Fort Duncan. I could not credit the astounding tale, or be made to believe that enslavement for debt would be upheld by force on our soil. The afternoon brought us the whole story, but it was too late for help or redress.

Manuel went with some misgivings, but they were lulled to sleep by the endearments of his Delilah. After they had made their purchases, she contrived to separate from him while he continued up the highway towards the warehouse of his employer. Nearly in front of it he was beset by the kidnapper in wait for him, but, for a moment, he shook himself clear, and took refuge in a house near by in which he had a right to expect safety. He was driven forth to meet the presented pistol of the pursuer, who was now reinforced by an American *gentleman*. Defence was now impossible; his hands were bound, and he was led to the ferry and speedily

crossed over to the Mexican side, and then lodged in prison. What became of his false-hearted Saloma I know not, but the next day Manuel was bound on a horse and conveyed to the chains and whipping-post of San Juan.

All the most respectable inhabitants of Eagle Pass united in laying this case in particular before the Secretary of State, because it was so open and public, and because it embodied facts and precedents on which it was imperative for the well-being of all the inhabitants of the border to have some definite understanding with the Mexican Government. It was hardly possible that any American Secretary of State would fail to demand back the victims thus wrenched by force from the shelter of our flag, much less that he would allow such a practice to stand unrebuked—and even sustained—in its insulting violations of our national soil and sovereignty. The meanest power in Christendom would not endure such an outrage without protest; and he who could write such an elaborate letter to Hulsemann for his own honor, could hardly do less than bestow an hour on a question that touched to the core the honor of the republic. Spain had invaded our soil at New Orleans, and bore off Rey, and the outrage was hushed up and overlooked in a most ignominious manner. She had seized the letter-bags of our ships in the ports of Cuba, and we resolutely shut our eyes, we even recalled the able and patriotic consul, General Campbell, in the fear that he would be more strenuous than civil in defending our flag and citizens from outrage. Austria had offered us a deep insult at Constantinople, but as it made no text for eloquent declamation—it was borne in silence, and buried forever in the Dead Sea of the State Department. Yet, with all these omissions of duty before our eyes, we, credulous borderers, were actually sanguine enough to believe that our Cabinet would have the courage to protect the inhabitants of the frontier from actual

ing citizens of the Union, and they will deny the fact; yet I shall presently show them, by official warrant, that it is true, and what will surprise them more—that their most zealous free-soil leaders have, unwittingly perhaps, clenched a thousand fetters by a misdirected effort to make one of them a shade lighter.

THE FALSE WIFE.

ONE of the victims of these chartered man-hunters was in our employ, and the atrocious impunity with which he was kidnapped gave me a deep, indelible distrust of our border habits, which nothing else I have ever known here would justify. It shook asunder at once and forever the bonds of neighborly good-will with all the sharers in the assassin work, and made me feel that Wild Cat and his band were safer, nobler, and to me more acceptable company.

We were a month perhaps under the shelter of our beloved reed cottage, when a tall, slender, and not ungraceful man, of nearly, if not altogether, pure Indian blood, came to seek employment in our bee-hive, at Eagle Pass, as a carpenter, general servant—anything. He plead for instant work and bread for himself and his wife, Saloma. She came with him—a pert, lively, fluent creature—a very Delilah in her officious, caressing ways, and a Delilah, indeed, she proved to her fond husband. He lived in her, and hardly could keep his eye from her even while he was taking orders for the business of the day. There was something restless, perturbed, and wandering in his looks and ways; something so different from the stern, self-control of the Indian habits, that it attracted our notice, and, before many days, we learned that he was a peon fleeing from the stripes of a rigorous master at San Juan, some thirty miles in the interior.

fully held in bondage in Mexico, he must make good his claims to freedom, before the judicial tribunals of Mexico.

"Your obedient servant,

"DANIEL WEBSTER."

It would be a salutary hint to some of our public servants to hear how their short-comings in law and patriotism are discussed by our straightforward, plain-spoken men of the frontier. They care not a pin for high names ; if they do not see common sense and manly truth in it, they will let nothing pass without trying the ring of the metal. They yield to Cæsar, frankly and generously, what is due to Cæsar, but they must believe it is due before they grant their tribute.

Mr. Webster's letter was read to a little knot of these sturdy reasoners, and each characteristic comment had a voter's weight :

"To say that it does not warrant an application to Mexico, when a resident on our soil is kidnapped," exclaimed one ; "Mr. Webster never said that ; he can't take such a position, it would leave every man and woman on the border at the mercy of the Mexicans."

"It is so set down," said the recipient of the letter, showing the signature and official seal of the Secretary of State.

"Nothing but my own eyes could have convinced me that such a paper could come from this administration," was the slow response.

"We need not send to Washington to learn that the State authorities can punish an infraction of their State laws," observed one of the memorialists.—"What we asked of the wisdom of the Cabinet, was the redress of a wrong done to the nation, and in the case when the offence and the victim had passed beyond State jurisdiction."

"You have the answer, here: the crime against our flag and laws goes for nothing, and if kidnapped people don't like slavery they must 'make good their claims to freedom before the tribunals of Mexico.'"

"But, Sir, suppose the kidnapped man were an American citizen—one of us here present?" persisted the profane doubter of Washington infallibility.

"The principle here set forth is the same," was the reply. "There is no hint of security or redress in any case where the kidnapper is not an officer of the Mexican government."

"Then you mean to say that any body else can come here and seize people to make peons of them in Mexico whenever they please," repeated the unsatisfied querist.

"I repeat that such is the tenor of this official document," replied the proprietor thereof.

"If there is no help against Mexicans coming here to steal men, there can be no way to prevent our following up and shooting the stealers on the Mexican side," put in an old borderer, who, upon the whole, liked this independent, self-relying view of the case.

"Well," said the first speaker, after a long pause, "Well, I thought this administration more patriotic,"—another pause—"and this Cabinet more politic,"—another pause—"and Mr. Webster a sounder lawyer,"—and then a longer and sadder pause—for he had always been an enthusiastic "Webster man."

"As to administrations, they are pretty much alike in these omissions," said his friend; "and as to the legal soundness and patriotism of the thing, they never expected to hear of it again from this remote border, and that makes an immense difference; but, honestly, now, would this affair change your

vote in any degree, if the man you now condemn were nominated for the Presidency by your party?"

"Candidly, then, I should all the same feel bound to support the nominees of my party," was the frank reply.

So faded and effete has become the preserving salt of republican virtue, that sensible men, of good repute, make no scruple to avow that party over-rides principle and country.

"I must support the candidate of my party."

What an abyss of mire and corruption; what a sinking depth of moral decadence; what a departure from the lofty spirit of '76 there is in that perverse cry! It loads the air, it taints the moral health of the nation, and makes every returning election day more vilely opposite to what it should be, a jubilee of sacred duties.

"We will support our party, even in its wrong-doings."

"We will elect our men, by whatever means we may."

"We will divide the spoils, though the Union dies under the knife."

These are the reigning laws of party in these latter days; and if on these rocks we are not wrecked, our national greatness may outlive the stars, for if not in them, there exists no danger for our republic.

In dismissing this subject—for the time at least—I will only add that on the receipt of this singular, and, to most, unexpected, refusal to guard our soil from invasion and our residents from enslavement in Mexico, an appeal was had to the United States Senate. On the call of that body for information, February 26th, 1851, the Secretary of State *suppressed* the above letter, and presented such an incomplete account of the affair as laid the matter asleep. If Mr. Webster were by any chance to be so extravagant as to get into debt—which, however, is scarcely supposable—how painful it would be to his legion of admirers to have his rules applied to himself; how

afflicting to see the most illustrious son of New England rated on the serf-roll at five dollars a month, and condemned to live on a peck and a half of corn a week !

BAPTISTE THE BORDERER.

THE first family that raised a roof-tree and gathered round a hearth-stone in Eagle Pass, after the proprietors, was such an one as can only be found in our American frontier settlements. Our invaluable Baptiste and his family are born children of the border. They could not find contentment and house-room if a clear, untroubled space of forty or fifty miles of wilderness did not lay behind them, for air and exercise. There is only this difference of taste between husband and wife, and that is almost universal in genuine frontiersmen. The man looks back with an ever-longing eye to the wild freedom of the receding forest ; the woman, and mother, turns hers eagerly forward to meet the coming civilization, and thinks hopefully of the day in which she shall be able to dress and school her children, "as they do in the settlements." Baptiste carries with him my heartiest sympathies, when I see how kindly and bravely he rules down his strong natural impulses, and strives and toils, and builds and plants, with affectionate docility, to gratify his wife with a regular home, and to gather around her the household wealth of a thrifty farmer. His honest, weather-beaten face beams all over with proud satisfaction when his wife and children are dressed to their taste in fine and fashionable apparel, although, for himself, he would not give his fox-skin hunting-pouch for all the contents of all the tailors' shops in the Union. So, too, of churches and schools ; he is ready to admit they are excellent things for the children, since his wife

says so, but can't conceive how such things could be of any use to him. Yet, Baptiste is not without a rough-hewed idea of religion, or rather of superstition, which is a kind of left-handed religion, since it rests upon a reverential sense of some Great Cause, above and independent of human self-sufficiency. He offers, in his own crude way, his incense of prayer and thanksgiving to the Eternal Father, and could not be persuaded that any other mortal could teach him better than he knows himself, how his helmsman conscience must steer his way to the narrow gate that opens into the other world.

He reminds us incessantly of Cooper's inimitable Leather Stocking, if we could imagine that simple and sincere woodsman falling in love and winning the heart of a sprightly, industrious girl of mixed blood, whose greatest ambition it is to live in the settled and comfortable independence of the white women.

Parthena—for that, in true border taste for original and high-sounding words—is the classic name of Baptiste's wife, had lived awhile in the precincts of a Mexican frontier camp, and her impatient desire for a respectable and secure home was increased by the absence of everything like it, in that sink of lawless misrule. She wished us to assign them a homestead within our limits, where her pigs and poultry, her bee-hives and dove-house, her cows and her children, could live and flourish under American laws. I liked her honest ambition and straightforward plans, and cordially promised her all the aid and good will I could command. Baptiste, who thinks no labor painful that contributes to his wife's happiness, chose forthwith the site for his habitation, and took possession. He threw a blanket over a long outstretching arm of a mesquite, leaned his gun against the trunk, hung his shot-pouch by its side—a sure sign that hard work was

in question—and began, single-handed, to construct his house. His canoe and hatchet, with a spade and pick-axe, borrowed for the emergency, was all he wanted, and almost before we had thought twice about it, he came to borrow a team to “bring home his old woman and his plunder.” Our kind-hearted neighbor, Mr. Campbell, turned out his enormous wagon, a second Noah’s ark, on wheels, with a faithful hand and a perfect procession of the magnificent oxen for which Texas is famous. Our contribution was less imposing, but it was sufficient, and in due time Parthena was installed in her own house by her exulting husband.

His house, the work of his own hands, is worth describing, both as a model for self-helping architects, and because it is like Baptiste himself, a curious graft of civilization on the natural stock.

A FRONTIER DWELLING.

OUR embryo town lies on a sloping prairie, sprinkled with mesquite trees like a vast and venerable orchard, and falling in successive platforms or terraces down to the river’s edge. The bank nearest to the water—and only divided from it by a narrow strip of rich interval, scantily dotted with young mulberry trees—is a steep bluff of ten or twelve feet in height; and in the face of this bluff our man of nature has concealed his temporary dwelling. I say concealed, for there is nowhere around it a sign of human habitation to break the smooth expanse of the platform, until you wend down its face and actually penetrate the little hidden ravine that opens into his door. Then, all at once stands revealed a spacious, lightsome chamber, scooped out of the hill-side. The front, looking towards the river, and on the intervening garden-ground, is latticed with reeds, and cunningly veiled by the

earth and herbage of the bank, but is still pleasantly pervious to the cheering breeze and fresh light of this genial climate. The other three sides are cut square and even from the solid earth, which is here a favorable admixture of sand and clay, and requires no other walls or support. On these rests the roof.—Willow and sycamore poles of sufficient size and strength stretch from side to side; and closely laid on these supporters is a cross carpet of reeds, which is again covered with a thick layer of grass and earth. A carriage might drive over this sod-roof, so sllily spread, even with the general surface, without suspecting the existence of a dwelling beneath, or endangering in the least the safety of its inmates. A plaster of mud, slightly tempered with lime—which any man may make for himself in this limestone region—gives whiteness and finish to these earth walls, and the quarries of beautifully stratified sandstone from the hills that back the town supplies a firm and durable floor for the trouble of bringing home and laying down the natural flags.

All this is Baptiste's own handiwork, and a proud, little woman is his busy, saving wife, as she surveys it, while she bestirs herself among her milk-pans and her poultry. For love of her, this wandering hunter gave up the life of his choice; for her sake his hands resigned the gun and dug this grot for her comfort; he explored the islands for his reeds and rafters; for her sake he forgot the tempting fish in the limpid Escondida, to handle the axe and raft over, with only the help of his light canoe, the timber for his simple framework.

The millionaire, who gives the partner of his wealth the overflowings of his golden cup, wherewith to make ostentation of their luxury, cannot make such a heart-offering as does this love-tamed rover of the wilds when he thus "gives his body to painful toil" to create for his wife comforts, which

to him, personally, are absolutely superfluous and of no value whatever.

Yet, with wifely tact, Parthena is careful not to interfere with her husband's ways, or undervalue his favorite pursuits. He hunts, and fishes, and traces up the wild bee at discretion, and his table rarely lacks a plentiful supply of the best that the field and river can furnish, though now and then, perhaps, a little to the detriment of his more regular pursuits. We come in largely for the benefits of these excursions, in consequence of the little acts of kindness we were enabled to show his "old woman," who by the way must be decidedly on the bright side of twenty-eight. Scarcely a day passes in which the tall form of Baptiste does not loom along, and, without more ado, deposit in the cook's hands a choice wild turkey, a brace of ducks, a handful of pigeons, partridges, or some other offering of the chase, and then he disappears, as abruptly as he came.

Setting aside these bribes to good-will, this obliging, off-handed, independence sets so well upon them, and is brightened withal by such a willing, self-helping industry, that I am never tired of watching the busy, cheerful ways of the family, and never see them without a wish that the millions of working men who have, as he had at first, no capital but their own strong hands, were able, like him, to build themselves free homes, and collect around them the elements of independence, and so rear their children to the stature of free-men.

SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS.

YET I ramble from the main subject. Our town was begun. It held a commodious double tent, with the first settler and proprietor, Mr. C., and his lady, that was the aristocratic party. Then our reed shelter and its twain. We were the

democratic middle class, and close upon us was the thatched shed of Don Guillermo the mason, in blood, bone and sinew, pure Indian; he constituted the radical native American party. Finally there was a score of men quarrying out stone and making adobes; some of these were free-born toilers, the working-class, about which all men talk brotherhood and philanthropy, but to whom few give the warm right hand in cordial fellowship with a hearty "Let us work together, my brother." Below this is still another rank, enduring all the ills and blight of slavery, but with none to sorrow, none to pray with them, for there is no political capital, no religious fame to be made out of the Mexican peon.

If he lived in the almost impenetrable heart of Asia, and the trumpet of benevolence could come sounding over the ocean billows, bless me, how busy would be our missionary love! If he spoke an impracticable tongue, how we would send him tracts! but who ever did, how can any one get up a high-steam-pressure of enthusiasm for the misery and darkness that lies down and dies at our door-step? The thing is preposterous. When we live among it, even African servitude excites no sympathy, that is, none of that generous over-boiling sympathy that unlocks our purses and disposes us to burn the houses over the heads of cold-blooded, unfeeling owners. Distance lends enthusiasm as well as enchantment to the view, and against the crowds who devote their lives to the Malays and Hottentots, we have hardly a Fry or a Howard to do as much for our domestic heathen.

In our Mexican family, now that they were in such close vicinity, I could trace the destructive course of peonage, and was forced, against many prejudices, to see that it was more deadly and blighting than African slavery. Laying aside specialities and special pleading, peonage has dragged down ten or twelve millions of Indians on this continent to half their

number and to a most abased and hopeless condition. African slavery snatched some hundred thousand slaves from a land of gross and cruel slavery, and raised them and their descendants to a Christian and moral elevation incomparably superior to any condition we know of the race in their native land. I do not say we should continue a wrong that good may come of it. I do not say we should, and I know in this age we cannot, keep alive the slave-trade, or unduly retard the liberation of the bondman; but whoever will look at it calmly, will say that the broadest and deepest of American sins is the enslavement, degradation and slaughter of the Red Race.

SLAVERY EXTENSION.

HERE, then, was the first blow struck towards the creation of the town of Eagle Pass. The name existed before, a simple translation of the term "*Paso de Aguila*," the "*Eagle Ford*," or Pass, by which this crossing was known to the Mexican traders and soldiers. Here a part of those who came to re-conquer Texas from the Texans swept across the Bravo. Here, when Mexico was in turn invaded by the Americans, Captain Veach had his encampment, and recorded its name in his dispatches to Washington. It shows how very willing this section of Mexico was to be conquered; in that Captain Veach kept a population of more thousands than he had tens, of armed men in quiet order during the fiercest portion of the war. The first clamor of discontent broke out in the towns of this district of Mexico, when it was understood they were to have back their own soldier despots. The peon holders were the least willing to be Americanized, because they also own all the land, are not taxed either for land or slaves, and are themselves co-partners in the government

with the soldier chieftains. The actual tillers of the soil, the tenders of the herds, those whose labor extracts from the earth what wealth Mexico produces, would have gained freedom, hope, education and religious light under our laws, and so far as they knew, or cared anything about it, desired the change. With what glossy rhetoric, but most absurd statesmanship did members of Congress declaim, day after day, until the very columns of the legislative halls must have ached with their stupidity, on the danger of "*extending slavery*," by taking in Mexican territory! Every town so received was an orphan caught up from the desert of sin and servitude, and folded to the cherishing bosom of light and liberty. Where the African slaves were to come from to extend slavery I never could learn, for none are brought to us from other countries, and those who merely change their residence from one section to the other leave room behind them for free labor to step in and reign. Slavery may roll away more and more to the South and prepare the way for white industry, as it has been doing from the first days of the republic, but this "extension" cry is a chimera, a fiction of party pleading, and in twenty years men will wonder at those who believed in it, as we of to-day wonder at witchcraft, epidemics, and religious wars. As African slavery recedes southward and breaks into new fields, waiting to be subdued to civilization, it leaves at the North, State after State, emancipated ground, and always on it an offering of freedmen. Slavery has had its mission, and when the work is done, and the lesson taught, it will expire by its inherent terms of limitation.

A CHARACTER.

THE very day I came to take possession of my cane cottage I unearthed a new and valuable inhabitant of our city—of the future. I mined out an excellent carpenter and a useful neighbor from the heart of a small mountain of lumber, in which he had interred himself with his box of tools, workbench and kitchen assortment. I have pondered long and thoughtfully upon it, but to this day I cannot make out whether he contrived his own path to the centre, or whether those huge piles of boards and beams closed up spontaneously around him. He was an eccentric genius, from North Carolina I think, not at all afraid of hard work or rough fare, and well skilled to improve his wild and independent house-keeping by fishing and hunting, but stoutly resolved not to know anything, or approve anything, about the Mexicans. It was his daily comfort to lecture them upon their careless, unskilful ways, and it did not seem to abate a particle of the unction that none of them understood a word he said. They would stand still and listen with an air of grave and respectful attention to the end, and when he clinched his rebuke with his regular closing question:—

“Now, don’t you think you are the most trifling, good-for-nothing beings that were ever seen upon the earth since it was created?”

They would as regularly reply to what they could observe was an emphatic interrogatory, and but polite to answer in the affirmative, with a cordial—

“Si, Señor.”

After this refreshment Harris would return to his saw and plane, a relieved man for the day. It was not his fault if the Mexicans did not know their deficiencies.

By way of parenthesis in his contract for a warehouse and ferry scow, he built a light skiff for Don Juan Fernandez, who lived in an island of live oaks on the rolling prairie, almost as solitary and self-sufficing as his famous namesake did on his island of the ocean. A fertile, well-watered, and eminently beautiful and healthy stretch of country, equal in extent to the State of Delaware, and no whit behind it in the value of its natural resources, is owned by the Fernandez kith and kin, but all this immense sweep of splendid land is unoccupied by its proprietors. With the exception of Don Juan, who now has come over to Eagle Pass with about three hundred of his cattle, there are none of the owners who bring their families even temporarily to live on their ranchos. Nothing but peons and cattle, with a slight occasional sprinkle of Indian visitors, have homes in this tempting range. No Mexican I ever met has even an idea of what English and Americans mean by a country life.

We found our boats delightful auxiliaries, for we followed Don Juan's example, and supplied ourselves with the means of enjoying the water, and we visited in them many a cosey little nook for a gypsy dinner, that we never would have found by a land path.

The first trip was to the Bathing Rapids on the Escondida. For half a mile the stream shoots along between its walls of verdure in a clear and steady volume, but at that distance we came upon the dancing, singing, rejoicing rapids, that rush laughingly over the rocky bed, water-hollowed into innumerable natural baths. In these cradles the idle or timid bather may recline at careless length, and the caressing tide will lift him in its cool embrace, and enfold and lave his indolent limbs in its watery delights without the cost of an effort. There is not such another limpid, refreshing consolation and cure for indolence within a hundred miles. The

two miles that Fort Duncan is above the pure current of the Escondida, places it just that distance above its proper location, not less on account of the health and comfort of its garrison than in the military view of its also being that far removed from the point commanding the best fords and inlets to the Mexican trade and settlements.

It is a singular dispensation of nature that for scores of miles the Mexican bank of the Bravo is enriched with a continual succession of ever-living springs—“*ojos de agua*,” or, “water eyes,” as the Mexicans call them, while on the American side opposite, no one has been found. The want of frequent and permanent water-courses is felt on our side of the Bravo, from Santa Fé to the Gulf, as a great drawback to rapid and extended settlements.

WELLS.

SPEAKING of water supply, I would remind those who are opening farms that in this climate, where, with water, crops are so varied, so certain, and so abundant, and land withal so cheap, wells and means of irrigation should be counted as a part of their capital investment, for no part of it would so securely return them a high interest. A farm of a mile square, with more or less water front, can be purchased, together with a pair of working oxen and half a dozen milk cows, for a thousand dollars. Another two hundred dollars—to take sure margin, say five hundred—will, by the various improvements lately made in water-raising machinery, insure irrigation to gardens and orchards that will give back annually and certainly thirty or forty per cent. on this whole investment. There is no space here for long sums in arithmetic, but the whole history of agriculture where irrigation is practised, establishes the fact. The same outlay in land, the

same labor in cultivating it, will, under this sky of almost ceaseless sunshine, ensure double crops to the farmer. If, therefore, his works for the supply of water do perchance cost half as much as his land, they will still remain that portion of his invested capital which returns to him the largest and surest interest.

Wind-mill wells can certainly be erected to good account any where in the long-extended valley of the Rio Bravo. The breeze is strong and constant from the sea most part of the year, and the nature of the country argues extensive substrata of water. It is found at about thirty feet below the surface at Fort Duncan, but how far the amount would supply irrigation has never been tried. Americans are hardly aware that the richest and most productive countries of ancient civilization depended almost wholly upon artificial power for water, but that with it their two or three crops a year made them marvels of wealth and fertility.

Embankments, and machinery for making the rapids and even the high annual freshets available for irrigation, can be applied with great economy and effect at Eagle Pass and a hundred other points on the Bravo, and some day the right man will come to confer on us this one thing needful, and ensure himself the while a splendid fortune.

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MELON SUGAR.

THERE are certain valuable productions for which this valley is peculiarly adapted, and which are in all times unfailing staples of national wealth. Among them will be sugar, and wines of generous quality. At the World's Fair will be seen the first feeble offerings of the experimental vintages of the Union, but it is not probable the Lone Star will be there.

So, too, I look in vain for a display of sugars, and our in-

fant sugar interest is no contemptible feature in our domestic trade and home consumption. There are several varieties of sugar besides that extracted from the cane, which can be profitably manufactured in the United States, if from war or any cause it is desirable to be independent of other nations for that article of daily, abundant and universal use among the Americans.

Of these ranks first, the delicious sugar of the maple, whose healthy and delicate sweets are almost unknown in Europe.

Then comes pumpkin sugar, as simple and economical, or rather more so, than the beet sugar, which France is finding so available in her domestic industry. Then we have beet sugar, and corn-stalk sugar, like the last, only to be made profitable on a large scale and with adequate machinery. There are localities in the Northern States in which the soil, amplitude of intelligence and corps of fit laborers would make the culture of the pumpkin sugar desirable. The North American Phalanx—to whom all prosperity—have the soil and the men to make it a profitable branch of their system. I trust when the next World's Fair is mustered under United States auspices, (and to do it well, the American Institute has but to take it in hand and make Mr. Barnum one of their managers,) that we shall have a fine collection of specimen sugars. Three kinds I have named, besides the luscious maple and the well-known cane sugars, but there is a sixth kind sleeping in darkness, that only waits a kindly introduction to become of great importance to us on this border river, and to the Union, and that is *melon sugar*. There is no limit to the quantities the Rio Grande country is capable of producing, and an acre of melons will yield as many gallons of syrup, and of course we may presume sugar also, as the average yield of the cane fields of Louisiana. The apparatus for

crushing melons is simpler and cheaper than for the cane mills, as a common cider press, propelled by mule or horse power, will make five hundred barrels of the melon juice, which will yield five thousand pounds of sugar, in a month. The sugar is sweet, finer in flavor and color than the Mexican cane sugar,* and will command here ten cents a pound to the producer. I do not know (it remains to be tried) how many hands would be necessary to boil and finish off the sugar with the necessary apparatus, but it may be observed that Mexican laborers can be hired and rationed at less cost than plantation slaves can be maintained, if to the interest on the purchase price of the slaves we add the cost of their regular food and clothing. On the Mexican side of the river five dollars a month, and an allowance of a peck and a half of corn a week for food, is a fair rate. We have always paid more than twice that for our permanent servants, but of late we have repeated proffers of good shepherds and field hands for six and seven dollars a month, with the addition of meat and coffee rations, which the Americans have made the custom, and therefore a social law at Eagle Pass.

Our whole-hearted border man Baptiste has made the trial of the watermelon syrup in comparison with the cane juice, and the result satisfies me that melon sugar can be made a regular and profitable item of American agriculture. In all that wide belt of Southern States in which cane sugar is of doubtful or impossible culture, the more hardy melon can take its place. There are immense districts in Virginia and North Carolina in which no other crop can be raised to equal advantage. The watermelon is a proved experiment, as far as its saccharine qualities and productiveness are the question, but I am waiting in most anxious faith for the trial of the muskmelon, for I have an idea that it will be the best sugar producer after cane, with the advantage of living in a

colder climate and on land too light for the cane. If I am right in this opinion, it will introduce a new and profitable culture in other sections than the valley of the Rio Grande.

THE BLUE WATER. ♦

ABOUT three miles from us on the Mexican side is a lovely tree-embowered lakelet, so deep, clear, and transparent, that it looks like a little piece of the sky dropped down under those cool shades, and for this it is called *Aguita Azul*, or, the Blue Water. Few about us have taken the interest to explore the beauties of this sylvan waste, and are therefore ignorant of the fine fishing and bathing that may be found within an hour's easy ride from our ferry. The scenery, the primitive inhabitants, and the wild, out-door repast are sufficient for me, and the like thereof no city can proffer to my taste. Yet so many other charming places tempted me, that I was long in reaching the crowning enchantment of the Blue Water, but the while it grew to my memory by some indelible way-side incidents that chanced to join themselves to its name.

One day we were loitering under the twisted vines that wove together the branches of a brace of sturdy elms, turning over some curious petrified mosses that bordered our chosen spring, and discussing with our biscuits the comparative merits of the Blue Pool and a sister lakelet somewhat on this side of it, when a handsome boy of fourteen or fifteen glided into the circle, with the usual soft, noiseless step of an Indian. Unseen by us, he had observed us busy with the petrified grasses, and brought, by way of introduction, some specimens still whiter and more curious, from another spring. We accepted and admired them, and gave him of our refreshments, but he still lingered near, though modestly silent and apart from our conversation. This is the Mexican

and Indian way of hinting they have a favor to ask or something to communicate, and the very children will wait in calm patience for hours to be questioned, before they will obtrude their errand. Our winning lad was soon brought to confession. He wanted a *remedio*, that is, a cure for a sprained wrist. He never changed a muscle while they examined whether the bone was displaced. Happily it was not, and the cold-water remedy was ordered—as it proved—with eminent success. After directing our impromptu friend where to find us at home, to get bandages and some other little matters which we thought proper to prescribe in our medical capacity, we exchanged ceremonious *adios*, and he returned to the house of his friend Placida, who lived, as he said, not far from the Blue Water. “Not far,” means in Mexican any where between two rods and two leagues.

A Mexican *circa* (near by) is a dangerous trust for a tired traveller, but our boy was not more than a mile or so at random that time.

The next week he came, by permission of his master, to thank me for his now perfected cure, and to bring me a pretty pair of chickens, probably the whole sum of his earthly wealth. It would not be kind to refuse a gift which he had walked some miles and consumed his holiday to bring me, and besides, as I glanced at his scant garments, I saw a mode of honorable restitution, but I did not know his name, and I inquired it.

“Jesus de Dios (Jesus of God,) at your service, Madama.”

“Where is your father?”

“I have none; he is dead, but *mi tío Dios* (my uncle God) is a peon on the poor little rancho of the Holy Ghost (*Espíritu Santo*), near Monclova.”

“Then you do not like the rancho your uncle lives upon?”

“No; the Holy Ghost is very mean; it is too dry to pro-

duce corn or beans, and the peons are badly treated, so I ran away from it, and *was accommodated* by my master."

To be accommodated is the phrase for being sold, or selling one's self. The soft, smooth way in which law and custom words the whole system of peonage, is in strange contrast to the levity with which sacred names are lavished on every hand. We have a farm laborer named Jesus, and two or three female Jesusas about us. A low drinking-shop in the Mexican capital was called *La Madre de Dios* (the Mother of God), and the like blasphemous uses are made of all the names of the Trinity without the slightest sense of impropriety, throughout Spain and Spanish America.

PLACIDA.

THE boy Jesus spoke of Placida as the friend who stood closest to him in the absence of parents, home and kindred, and I afterwards learned that his esteem was not misplaced, for even in her rude and stinted lot, she found scope to show kindness and practice virtues. But what a commentary is her story on the social abasement fostered and forced by the adulterous union of church and state! The law bribes the Mexican priesthood to lend its influence to the proprietors of the soil, by exacting enormous fees for every religious service. The legal rates for marriage, baptism and sepulture, are beyond credibility. The poorer classes must sell themselves to the rich to buy them, or they must dispense with them altogether, yet the poor toiler, whom no one cares to instruct in anything else, is most carefully instructed that the due observance of these rites is the only gate to heaven. The legal marriage fee ranges from twenty to twenty-seven dollars, a sum the ill-paid laborers of Mexico rarely can command. Of course immense numbers have the

alternative of not marrying at all, or of selling themselves into bondage to satisfy the church. Many mate without its sanction, and if the priests were not very much better than the law desires them to be, thousands more would live and die unwedded. The demoralization is frightful where the primary bond of society sits so lightly. The perfidy, ill-treatment, desertions, and depraved family obligations, that grow out of it, are undermining the whole social fabric, for the higher orders do not escape the reaction of the poisonous harvest sown by their cankered laws.

By the fountain side, as she sat alone at the close of a week of sorrowful toil, I found Placida, and drew from her heavy-laden heart her history and her griefs. Her mother, a peon, and the wife of a peon—though both claimed more white than Indian blood—had lived in poverty and hardship an unwedded wife, until death struck her down. Her tardy conscience woke in the delirious agonies of dissolution, and then she gave two of her children to servitude to purchase the marriage rite and secure for her body Christian burial. Thus she ended a life of sin against herself by a not less sin against her little children.

The young Placida was one of these motherless ones, but she fell into gentle hands and was reared by a kindly mistress more like a daughter than a servant. She was taught all the elaborate handiwork for which Mexican females are celebrated; and in the capacity of *camerara* or chamber companion of her mistress acquired as much of grace and intelligence, with more wit and beauty, than fell to the lot of any of the old lady's numerous band of nieces and kinswomen.

A young man of pure white blood and excellent family, though poor and an orphan himself, saw Placida and fell in love like an Indian. That is to say, with the deep inflexible determination to win her at any cost, through any danger

and with no care for the future. He offered his own body to servitude for her freedom and her love in marriage band. He was accepted, or rather the Mexican law, which is very good—when a man is rich enough to buy it—enabled him to gain his wishes in this way. A peon can demand his *cuenta*, or account with his master, if he finds another master who is willing to take him and pay it, and for this reason every master is strenuous to increase the *cuenta* by setting down the soap the peon uses to wash his clothes, every ounce of meat, or lard, or sugar, with which he is tempted to improve his miserable ration of a peck of corn a week; every day lost in sickness and every particle of medicine he is forced to swallow, every thread of raiment for himself and family, if in his loneliness he is mad enough to seek the solace of a companion, all goes to swell his account and make a change of masters hopeless, and often mortgages his children also to slavery.

A capable, active man like Marco, light and lithe of limb, and skilful alike in the charge of herds and the labors of the field, is worth ready money, wherever bone and sinew is current coin (and I know not the corner of the world where the sweat and life-blood of the laborer is not bought and sold for the benefit of the rich man), and so Marco found his master in a cousin more favored than himself by fortune. The *cuenta* of his betrothed was demanded and paid, the benediction of the church bought with the same blood-money, and he came with his bride to a solitary but pleasant rancho, a few miles from Eagle Pass, to commence with her the hard and narrow life of a farm peon. In time their lowly abode was brightened by the sunshine of childish mirth. How unspeakably dear is this gift from heaven to parents like them! In their loneliness and poverty, that baby-boy was the sole light of life. The sun darkened in the sky when the angel of death snatched him from their arms. In the frenzy of their love

and bereavement, they gave all they had left to sacrifice—the freedom of Placida—to lay the cross of baptism on its expiring brow, and buy a place for the too dear clay in consecrated ground.

The unhappy parents must not die slaves in that gloomy and desolated hovel ; but when I strove to make the afflicted mother share in such hopes, she only replied by words of her lost child. She mourned less that she is no longer free than that she is no longer a mother.

VICTOR IN PERIL.

AN evil genius seems to pursue our heedless, poetical, tender-hearted, light-headed favorite, Victor. He is always pitching headlong into some difficulty, and at whatever cost he extricates himself from one to-day, he is always ready to plunge into another to-morrow. Yet he never bears malice, never casts reproach or blame on another, but forgives everything, and goes about singing as merrily as a lark the moment the pressure of the hour is lifted from his heart. To speak of a Mexican singing *merrily*, however, is a stupid inconsistency. The key-note of all their national melody would suit a funeral hymn. The wail of death, the melancholy anthem of a hopeless and expiring race mingles in every strain. Did ever any one hear a child of the Red Race carol a lay of joyous, brave-hearted promise ? I think not, and this listless despondency half-writes the epitaph of that peculiar and mysterious family, who, four centuries ago, were the sole inheritors of this vast double continent, and the lords of the rich and splendid empires of Mexico and Peru. They are prophetic in their sad melodies, and Victor is only a little less sad than most of his race, not really merry and heart-free like a confident child of promise. But he is naturally void of

thought, or fear for the future, and almost forgot he owed money that might cost him his liberty. With promises and part-payment he put off his Mexican creditor for many months, reckless of Mexican laws, and the danger of being shipped into peonage, if caught on the wrong side of the river. He had high ideas, too, of the dignity of American citizenship, and the omnipotent protection of the American Stars. With the case of Rios and the letter of our Secretary of State before us, we knew better than he did how frail such a reliance would be, in an emergency that demanded manly and prompt action from Washington, and we warned him to keep on our own soil, and hasten to a settlement with his creditor. This was difficult, as the old horse-dealer wanted ten dollars, the whole original debt, while in justice there were but three due ; but he insisted on considering the payments made on account as presents, and not to be included in the settlement. This Victor resisted, and he only went on singing his eternal ditties when told of his insecure position.

On the festival of San Diego, which the Mexicans religiously celebrate by an extra intensity of dancing, gambling, and horse-racing, there was to be a grand fandango at Piedras Negras, and Jesusa, Victor's coquettish flame, was resolved to display at it the unsunned glories of her new muslin dress and lace reboso. I have said he was careless of consequences at all times, and a thousand dangers would not frighten him, enamored and jealous as he was, from following in the footsteps of his charmer, and watching in person over his own interests. His creditor, the wily old Sousa, knew the parties, and guessed as much. Scarcely had Victor touched the opposite shore, when he was pounced upon by those who lay in wait for him, and promptly conveyed to prison, there to find the means to pay the full charge against him, or reconcile himself as he might to a long career of bondage. He

was told by the Mexican officers, and he felt, too, at last, that his American citizenship was but a broken reed against the Mexican slave laws, and he turned to his employer as his sole refuge. He can read and write like a padre, and a brief statement of his situation was soon penned and on its way to us, though on rather hard terms. The price of this favor was the admission of the whole face of the original debt before the alcalde, and thus secured either of his money or the body of a peon, the son of old Sousa, a fair-spoken, well-favored youth, rode over with Victor's appeal for aid.

A VEXED QUESTION.

THE young man received a brief and cold response, for it had been determined on this side to press home to the authorities at Washington whether they would permit the citizens of this Union to be enslaved for debt in Mexico. Some have said—and woe to the faltering, faint-hearted politicians who set open this door to bloody mischief!—that as our government had failed to chastise foreign wrong-doers, who came on our soil with deeds of violence, that they would, under that same charter, enter at will the soil of Mexico and deal out with armed hand their own code of justice. Others, and most of our immediate circle were of this opinion, were disposed to proceed with every formality, so long as law could be found, and when and just where the thread snapped off, to finish the matter according to the light of their own conscience, but always in a way to compel the attention of the Cabinet and force Congress to turn its sleepy eyes towards this troubled border. In keeping with this resolve, the messenger had his answer.

“This debt was contracted on this side of the river, and

must be settled by our laws, and we are besides more than ready to come to an issue, and bring both governments to the necessity of stating whether American citizens can be sold for peons in Mexico."

"But the great jurist who is now Secretary of State, has decided that they must submit to the tribunals of that country," I ventured to observe. "Oh, that was applied to persons kidnapped from our soil," was the reply; "and as even Mr. Webster cannot nullify *all* our powers as men and citizens, I think I shall bring home Victor this day."

"I must be of this party," said a friend: "I have a curiosity, a decided curiosity to hear the opinion of a Mexican commandante on the propriety of making slaves of our citizens," and while he spoke he buckled on his trusty six-shooter, and looked inquiringly into the state of the neat flask and pouch that usually kept company with the revolver.

"And I, too, must be of this agreeable company," added our careless, good-natured friend McG. "I like to take my share in these entertaining conversations when they are going forward," and with the word, another six-shooter was buckled on, and another saddled horse led to the door.

"Victor himself might choose to put in a word if the discussion grows warm, and here is an argument for his use," observed one of the party, throwing, as he spoke, an extra pistol over the saddle-bow.

And so in as brief time, and as lightly as I have written it, were they armed, in saddle, and under spur, to carry their bold errand on to the soil of Mexico, into the precincts of one of her military stations.

Away they dash, fearless and light-hearted borderers that they are, as to a festival, with smiles and words of courtesy on their lips, but stern determination in their hearts. These resolute and well-armed men will not fail to be sufficient unto

themselves: they are of the manly mould and free hearts of the people, used to be their own church and state in the scorching hour of trial, and not like that dead, spongy excrescence of the popular will—no, of party intrigue—a partisan cabinet.

They go in determined earnest to claim back their fellow-citizen from the clutch of iniquitous bondage, and while they clothe the demand in respectful phrase, they are altogether likely to bring back their man. If they do not, they will so place the affair that our derelict public servants must answer at the bar of Congress, and to the people of the Union, why they have sanctioned so long this system of enslaving American voters.

If blood flows in such a quarrel, as flow it must if our officials continue their passive connivance, on whose head rests the guilt of treason and the shame of cowardice? Let the blind and gorging owl of party that has supplanted our bold bird of liberty at Washington, prepare to look the people in the face, and in their indignant glance read their verdict of condemnation.

VICTOR RELEASED.

AFTER all, the main question was not brought to the test. We must wait a little longer to know whether, and when, the Government at Washington will deign a glance of inquiry and a word of protection to citizens of the Union, who are sold into slavery in Mexico. The principle still remains in abeyance, and my prayers that the Mexican officials would retain Victor, and our friends compel, by his resolute rescue, the timid time-servers of the day to show themselves at the bar of judgment, fell dead to the ground. Victor's friends went first to the commander at Fort Duncan, and requested him

to demand, officially, in the absence of all civil authority here, the restoration of an American citizen held in prison, and in danger of perpetual bondage, for a debt contracted on this side of the river, and therefore by no fair construction of law amenable to the Mexican penalty of servitude. The Colonel felt the case as a man should, but he was uncertain of the range of his powers and duty, and still more uncertain how far our Cabinet would justify him in too much zeal in defence of our own soil, flag and citizens; so he excused himself from taking an active part, at least until everything else was tried. This was exactly what suited the spirit so fast growing up on this frontier. The people have been so long and so shamefully neglected, that hundreds are as willing to put our own officials in open and blazoned default, as they are the Mexicans. Acute eyes and ready wits lie in wait to seize upon every clearly provable and inexcusable lapse, that can be carried home to the conviction of the people. There are some who only wish so to use the facts as to bring the owls of party to a clear vision, and a better performance of their duty. This is the sentiment of my family, and it is my own aim and wish, but it ought to be known in the United States that this is not the feeling of the "rest of mankind" out here. There are hundreds, on both sides of this border line, who want a war, and who *will make a war*, before this Administration goes out. The criminal neglect of our public servants is accumulating for them a beautiful entrenchment of justifications; and Millard Fillmore won't find his place a bed of roses, if he does not look to it himself. His sound, patriotic sense will soon set this all right, if he but takes it and his subordinates firmly in hand when he comes home from his travels.

Well, our party having duly acquitted their consciences by laying their plaint before Colonel Wilson, now at Fort Duncan, and having received the invariable border answer, "W

have no means to protect any body, and no powers to do anything," they went on very contentedly to settle things in their own way with the Mexicans. They found the Commandant asleep, and the Alcalde out of the way ; but they courteously ordered the officer to be forthwith awakened, and laid before him their errand without delay. He talked Webster to them for the first ten minutes, and the Secretary of State himself could not have dwelt with more unction and logical force on the nullity of American rights, the nothingness of the American flag, and the sweet and sacred duty of respecting above all things, and before all things, the supremacy of foreign laws, whatever befalls Americans. We are lazy here—distressingly lazy. It comes, I suppose naturally, of a soft southern climate, and an idle border life. We cannot put ourselves to the trouble to bend the knee and kiss the garment-hem of beings no better than ourselves, whether they wield the lash in Cuba or Mexico. Our party made him comprehend that no time would be lost in idle petitions to a distant and apathetic authority, but that, nevertheless, they were not disposed to leave an American citizen to be enslaved for debt. The Mexican Commandante had a shrewd guess, also, that they were likely to go on with their purpose in a fashion to create work for both governments, with very little regard as to how far either the one or the other would be pleased in the matter. So he met the emergency with good grace, and offered them Victor as an evidence of his own personal good-will. He could not gainsay the fact that Mr. Webster, in his zeal to side with the Mexicans, had left the door wide open for American retaliation. If Mexicans could not be punished for invading our soil and carrying off our citizens, neither could our citizens be punished for passing into the Mexican territory and rescuing the wrongfully captured with armed hand. Like other dilemmas, this of

Mr. Webster has two horns, and he cannot eschew both. The liberation of Victor was yielded under show of a special concession of friendship, and with a distinct insistence on the principle laid down by our own Secretary of State, that no matter how he got there, whether by dark deceit or open kidnapping, an American once on the other side loses all his rights, and must submit to slavery or whatever the Mexican law—or the want of it—may inflict. We must wait yet awhile to test to the core this principle and the intentions of our government. In the case of Victor—and I confess I regret it—it was not brought to trial. The prison doors, though closed by Mexican laws, and guarded by the written decision of our Cabinet, flew open at the significant request of a few earnest men, and the illegal captive walked forth free. Before the sun set Victor was at home chanting his interminable ballads, but some of us were but half content that his liberty was granted under protest and as a favor, when it should be his by admitted right as an American citizen.

MR. WEBSTER'S MANAGEMENT.

CLOSE upon the deliverance of Victor by the resolute will of the citizens, who, in the absence of government-protection, decided on protecting themselves, came up tidings of similar disorders, similar omissions, and similar necessity of acting in self-preservation at other points on the border. It was too evident that this unhappy charter of impunity for all manner of crimes would provoke retaliation, and if Mr. Webster's unheard-of doctrines were fully acted upon, deluge the frontier in blood. Congress and the country seemed entirely oblivious to the fact that the border was virtually abandoned to the Camanches, without one earnest effort for its defence, and its inhabitants officially given over to be carried off and

enslaved for debt, at the pleasure of the Mexicans. The Senate was appealed to, and received statement of the exact situation of the frontier with incredulous surprise, but on the 26th of Feb., 1851, it called on the Secretary of State for information "concerning the forcible abduction of any citizen of the United States, or of any person living under their protection, and of his conveyance, to be reduced into Peon servitude in the Republic of Mexico." On the 3d of March, the day before Congress adjourned, and when it was too late to prosecute the inquiry very closely, Mr. Webster sent in all the correspondence respecting the abduction of poor Manuel Rios, with but one exception. This exception is so peculiar and unprecedented that it would never command belief if it was not of undeniable record. It is this: the Secretary of State *suppressed*, withheld utterly, from the Senate, his own letter of legal judgment and Cabinet fiat, which is given a few pages back, and which was the principal object of the call of the Senate. In the stead of the letter of scornful discouragement which he positively did send to the remote, uncared-for borderers, but which he dared not lay before the searching eye of the Senate, he says, "the Legation at the city of Mexico have been instructed to inquire into the case to which these documents relate; but as there is no treaty of extradition with the Mexican Republic, it will probably be difficult to reach the offenders."

No one will have the rudeness to doubt Mr. Webster's veracity, and of course he had "instructed the Legation at Mexico" to do something or other, though in what form, or to what end, is not visible, since in more than a year there has been no sign of any result. Even the rebuke of the Senate did not provoke the slightest attention to the deplorable state of the border. His license to marauders still remained an unrepealed and effective decree of outlawry for the

border, and not the slightest movement—at least there is no evidence of any—has been made to obtain the “treaty of extradition,” which he declared an all-essential preliminary to any act of self-defence. Band after band of Mexican robbers crossed the river and committed the most atrocious outrages, until at last, after about thirty Americans had been plundered and slaughtered at their own camps and firesides, the terrible state of the frontier was brought before Mr. Fillmore himself. His upright spirit was moved to active measures, and something may possibly be done before it is altogether too late. Still it must not be concealed from the people of the United States, that up to the month of July, 1852, after nearly two years of strenuous complaint, this is still the shameful position of our border population.

The country is abandoned to the Indians, who press their depredations up to the very precincts of our posts, leading their trains of stolen horses and captive women, and slaughtering the herds of our citizens within hearing of the drums of our posts, and those posts being but feeble infantry stations, are carelessly left without the means of repressing the savages. The citizens themselves are liable to be carried by violence from their homes and sold for debt in Mexico; unoffending residents on our soil have been, and are, torn almost weekly from their homes in the midst of our settlements, and still, *even to the call of our magistrates, the Secretary of State ventures to reply that this Republic cannot prevent, or chastise, the abduction and enslavement of an American citizen for debt.*

INDIAN RANGERS.

MEANTIME our settlement thrives apace. Workingmen and mechanics come over to us from Mexico with their families,

and women and children begin to flit about the prairies. If the government forgets to take care of us, we will try to take care of ourselves. Yet something like a national system of border protection begins to dawn forth in a few imperfect rays, it is true, but still they foretell the coming day. The utter absence of connected, judicious lines of communication along this whole frontier is absolutely incredible, and it is rather to the neglect of Congress and the inertia of three or four of the highest officers in the army than to the Cabinet, that this glaring default is to be imputed. Fort Duncan was intended, if anybody had a clear intention in the matter, to check the Indians and protect the great line of travel which crosses into Mexico and there branches on the route to California, and to the right and left of it on the paths of trade to the mining districts. The site chosen is not the very best, but if there was a sufficient force, which Congress refused, it would still be of infinite value in cutting off Indian forays on the lower country. There are several famous old Indian crossing-places above, and still others not far below, the fort, which, if a little more frequently visited by reconnoitering parties, would have to be abandoned by these enterprising red gentlemen. But unhappily there is seldom enough men at the post to do garrison duty, and of course the Indians come and go at their leisure. Wild Cat has chastised them occasionally, and might be converted into a permanent and powerful safeguard if the government would assign his band a home and rations. Bread, powder, and shot would be the main part of the tax, and it would be at once most humane, most politic, and most economical, to create a kind of border militia of the friendly tribes. It could so be arranged as to gather their families in settled homes where they would be systematically fed, clothed and instructed, at once a present hostage for the fidelity of their warriors, and a

pledge of the future good conduct of their tribe. We owe something very different to the Indians on our borders from the mockery of gifts and treaties, which we have dealt them—gifts of rum to destroy, treaties that covered their sure destruction with specious promises of peace and protection. Yet we call ourselves excellent Christians, and thank God we are not wicked, like other nations.

Feebly as Fort Duncan is manned, its mere presence gives security to the settlement, although the most formidable thing about it is the name of a United States military fort. That has an imposing sound, and the Indians will not attack it, or the dwellers under its shadow, although if they chose, they could muster strong enough to take it almost any day. Three or four skeleton companies—and very thin skeletons they are—are all the government can allow for four or five hundred miles of this river frontier. If these infantry companies cannot be supplied by contract with the seven-league boots of the fairy tale, there is no use in the world in sending them after the Indians. Yet, to say the very truth, we have no fears of the Indians at Eagle Pass. Their tracks and camp-fires are seen almost weekly by our shepherds, and they are known to pass near us with trains of captive Mexican women and children, but an armed neutrality is the order of the times between them and the Americans. They steal our horses and cattle now and then, and far afield a dead body is sometimes found bearing their death mark, but they give a wide berth to the dwellings. I ride out in my rambling way two or three miles, and never think of the danger of an Indian surprise.

PABLITO.

WE have an intelligent, brave little fellow with our shepherds who escaped from the Indians with the intrepid fore-

thought of a veteran. Pablo, or Pablito, as we call him to distinguish him from the old shepherd of the same name, was living with his mother on a rancho near Monterey. The Camanches swept down on them one black night, and with many a dead body and bloody sign left behind on their desolating track, they returned homeward with a plentiful booty in horses, women and children. The Camanches have adopted a course towards captives of this class, which seems the result of a fixed policy. The young females are given as slave-wives to their warriors, and the children are enrolled among their own native-born youth. Among the Indians this has always been done in partial instances, to supply a loss by death, or to gratify the fancy of a favorite brave, but these Camanches seem to make it a subject of premeditated effort to obtain as large an infusion of white and civilized members as they can obtain for their tribe; yet they have no appearance of wishing to learn any of the habits of civilized life. Some think there is under this a superstitious hope to convey to their tribe some of the resistless powers of the whites. However this is, Pablito, a clear-eyed and ready-witted boy, was destined by them to share, with many a weeping girl in their train of captives, the capricious adoption of the Camanche lodges. With a quiet resolution, wonderful in a boy of ten, he determined to escape even from their distant hunting grounds, if Providence did not favor him with an earlier day. On this resolution he acted, and his first step was to calm suspicion and conciliate good-will by assuming an air of content, and evincing on every occasion a prompt desire to obey and oblige his captors. The young philosopher had even the wisdom to recommend to the female companions of this harsh journey to suppress their tears, and follow his example of a tranquil and resigned demeanor. "But," said he, with the slightest possible smile curving his handsome lip,

"I did not think it discreet to trust them with my whole plan of escape."

The savages had crossed the Bravo and were far beyond pursuit on the American side, before they relaxed in their haste or watchfulness, but when the nearest settlement was a hundred miles in their rear they abated their pace and allowed some rest to their worn-out captives. Pablito had noticed among their stolen horses a hardy black mustang that never stumbled or flagged in their desperate flight—and this he marked for his own. There were, he said, more beautiful horses among them and some that were fleet for a race of a few miles, but not one that could carry him so far without rest or food, as he intended to go towards his mother and his country before he stopped. He had made up his mind, with the stoic endurance of Indian blood, that he could have nothing to eat for the first three days, but in no wise daunted by this he launched out on his dimly-known course. In the night, when the tired and unsuspecting savages had at last abandoned themselves to untroubled sleep, he stole softly round to the desert-steed of his choice, detached him noiselessly from his picket, led him gently over the grass to a safe distance, and then alone, with no equipment but the Indian halter on his horse, unarmed and unprovisioned, he turned his face towards home and his mother. His general direction was correct, and at the end of three days he was met on the prairie by a friend of ours, and conducted to Eagle Pass. I claim the bold boy for my own particular service. It would be a sin to crush the spirit of this forest Bayard, into the narrow, down-trodden space of a peon's life; but we must bring his mother to him before we can arrange his future, and, meantime, by his own choice, he ranges the hills and river-dells on his bonny black in company with the shepherds and mounted herdsmen.

SHEPHERD LIFE.

Our shepherds have their autumn camp in a sweet, secluded *falda* or lap of the hills, that slopes down to the water's edge in a thick carpet of mezquit grass, about six miles below Eagle Pass. It is hedged up and veiled around by a luxuriant frondage of wild growth, and so backed and walled in by a steep range of barren hills, that the traveller might pass it at a short distance twenty times before he discovered it, or noted the deep path that winds into it between the river and the almost perpendicular mountain-side. It is amusing to see Pablito sorting out and keeping order among a hundred or two of young lambs and kids as they frolic about the shady pen, impatient for their mothers, who have been led out to pasture in a separate flock. He has made some changes in the family distribution, and the mothers who have twins are to be robbed of one of their young to supply some bereaved ones with substitutes for their lost offspring. The older shepherds are not half as tender and adroit as my active, attentive Pablito in making these substitutions, and he is evidently gratified with my visits and the warm interest I take in his extensive young family. He will announce to me with the gravest solicitude, that the real mother of that painted kid has a daily quarrel with its adopted mother to regain it, and tell me how "that black lamb with the white mark on its head, like a royal crown," was lost by its dam and searched up by itself another one in that fine blooded ewe. In fine, we have an infinity of important consultations together, and neither of us ever tires of watching the ways of the animals. In these visits I have learned to comprehend the charm of a pastoral life, so hard to be understood, like the freedom of the sea, by those to whom it is not congenial. This out-door life and the easy movement from place to place,

has sufficient occupation to give relish to his simple diet and airy couch, with so much care and aim as to keep astir his faculties, but not enough of either to load him with anxiety. The shepherd wakes in the morning with something to do before him; he throws himself down to sleep at night with the consciousness of something done. The daily task and daily bread are finished together, and he passes into slumber on the wings of duty done, and the lulling certainty that to-morrow's work is within the easy compass of to-morrow's strength.

This calm monotony would not suit the eagle soul who feels a higher but more troublous mission beating at his heart for outlet, but to those who are of lowlier ambition there is a sweet independence and an unspeakable repose in a pastoral life. The sun disappears behind his golden curtain, the stars glance kindly from the cloudless sky, a light blaze flickers cheerfully under the over-hanging branches, lighting up with changeful smiles, the white tent picturesquely gleaming among the foliage, and cheerful voices rise and fall around it, like the music of the distant sea. Our shepherds are enjoying their supper of *atole*, or meal boiled in milk, roasted ears of corn, and broiled kid, and Pablito, with wide-open and astonished eyes, is hearing, for the first time, what everybody on the border hears doubtingly at first, but at last comes to accept as truth, that the Americans bring regular rains and seasons, such as they desire, with them. Pablito, with much polite deference, ventures upon some incredulity, but Domingo assures him upon the faith of a baptized Christian, it is true, for *he* knows that in Texas they had, in old times, the same serene, unweeping skies that now overhang the Bravo and despoil its harvests, year after year, but as soon as the Americans came and tore up the soil far and wide with their great steel ploughs, the rains began to fall wherever they made settlements, and kept step with them as they advanced

westward; from the Trinity to the Brazos; from the Brazos to the Colorado; from the Colorado to the Nueces, and now the harvest-giving rains were following their march to the Bravo. This is a singular truth, and a more complete philosophy may explain the *rationale* in the planting of trees, and household fires, and the upturning of the earth, but young Pablito was rather slow of faith in such phenomena.

"It is a curious thing," said Pablito senior, who is the deacon of the Peon circle, as Victor is its scholar, "a marvellous thing in truth, how these Americans persuade the rains to follow them wherever they go, while Christians have to dig *acequias* (canals for irrigation,) it is really wonderful."

"Do the bees also go before the Americans?" asked Pablito with interest.

"You may believe not," interposed Domingo with energy. "The bees belong to St. John the Baptist, and they always appear before Christians come to a country, in order to warn the Pagans to make way for them, but the Americans have no religion, and San Juan will not send his bees to drive out anybody for them. Yet it is true rain is given to them, though they have no saints or any religion."

None of the company could explain this mystery, and it may still be agitated in their star-lit councils, unless, indeed, they have finally accepted a suggestion of Pablito's. He remembered, at Monterey, the celebration of some national day by a party of Americans, in which they fired salutes, drank *aguardiente*, and made as great an uproar generally as twice as many Mexicans could do, with all their facilities of noise-making excited to the highest, and all this squared so exactly with an Indian's ideas of a grand religious festival that the boy thought, very naturally, it must be in honor of their patron saint. The name of Washington had some association with this tempestuous jubilee, and he modestly intimated his

belief that San Washington was the patron of the Americans, and that it was his intercession that brought them these refreshing and crop-producing showers. For some mischievous reason of his own our man Victor, who was saddling the horses for our homeward ride, thought proper to encourage this opinion, and almost clinched their belief that after all it was possible the Yankees had a religion and a saint of their own, by reminding them how parched and rainless northern Mexico has been since the American army had withdrawn from the country.

THE INDIAN ALPHABET.

WE were riding one day among the broken range of hills, that press down close to the river, some seven or eight miles below Eagle Pass, when Pablito quite calmly observed that eleven mounted Indians had passed along there the day before, with a train of horses and captives.

"Who gives this information, Pablito?" I naturally inquired.

"I see it with my eyes; here are the tracks," said the boy confidently, and almost surprised that any eyes could fail to see them. I dismounted, and with careful observation could discern through the short grass a confused multitude of tracks, but they seemed too faint and too much overlaid, one upon the other, to be worth much as guides, but I desired to know how my brave and intelligent little shepherd came to such definite conclusions.

"There were three large American horses, as you can see by the size of their foot-prints, and two mules, and the rest, as you may see by their little unshod feet, were mustangs, (native ponies,) and they were afraid and went fast, for here

the hoofs all come down in a gallop, and close to the leader, for the track is narrow and equal."

"But how do you know that these eleven animals were all that bore riders out of so large a *cavallarda*?"

"The horses that are free scatter out in a broad and unequal line, and those that carry the weight of a master leave deeper prints." He pointed out to me the difference, but I could discover none. It would be invisible to any sight but that of an Indian, or a keen and practised borderer.

"And why are you so sure that they passed yesterday, and late in the day?"

"Ah! it is very clear. It was not before the norther that blew so freshly in the forenoon, for that would have covered the tracks with more dust, and yet there are signs on them of the sprinkle we had before sunset."

"Are you willing to take your pony and follow up the trail, for more information?"

"If you command it," was the prompt reply. I had no thought of sending him out on this dangerous quest, but I am sure he would, if so ordered, have taken the trail at once. They have no other books, but they read letter by letter these signs and marks in the wilderness, and spell out their meaning as certainly as if they read it from a printed page; and these Mexicans are as far from cowards, and as willing to face any danger, of which they can comprehend the nature and the way of contending with it, as any people in the world.

THREE FORMS OF SLAVERY.

HERE, then, we have side by side, as if laid out for dissection and verdict, the three forms of slavery into which Christendom divides its profitable custom of trading in the bones

and blood of human labor. We have African servitude on our side of the river, and they have white and Indian servitude on the other. It is comfortable to have this difference in our ways, for by it we can be as much shocked as we please at our neighbor's iniquities and read him glowing lessons on the awfulness of his doings, and he can do the same by us; and so nobody have time to look at their own sins. What a miserable, moping set we would be all around, if we had no faults but our own to cure! Then the superfine free-soil Christian that kills nothing but white factory girls and hired bond-servants with neglect, contempt, unwholesome fare, overwork and the like, has such a delicious charter to be severe on the owners of *bought* black slaves and red ones. It would be a pity—and a new thing in human nature—if we did not enjoy the banquet of self-glorification.

The third form of servitude—the hiring servitude of want, ignorance and vice—is not, on this side of the Atlantic, an hereditary destiny, at least, not quite so absolutely as it is in the Old World, but still there are thousands born in our large cities with the taint of sin and neglect so strong upon and around them, that the honest, full grown life of freedom is as nearly impossible to their fettered souls as emancipation, and the light that must keep step with it, is to the born thrall of a southern plantation. The man who *must* sell his sweat and sinews to hard repulsive toil, or *starve*, is not free. The child who is nurtured in misery and vice, who is never taught how to live a useful life, and who from the cradle is goaded into a war of self-preservation against the interests of his fellow-man, is not likely to win a true and honorable freedom. The place of beginning is to so frame the laws and ~~systems~~ of society, that instruction and employment shall be the sure and well-understood right of all the children of the State.

Next step will follow more easily and naturally, which is

to make labor honorable. Not to talk of its honor and utility in general abstractions, and then descend from the pulpit or forum, to wither with courtly scorn, or trample down in the mire with aristocratic heel, your hired servant who has been provided with no honest way of getting bread but by selling you all the good years of his life.

My test of a sincere and consistent anti-slavery man is very simple, yet in some scores of intelligent professors of that faith, I have found but two who came up to it. It is this : *Will the disciple of equal rights give a place at his table to his hired domestics? Will he welcome to his parlor the mechanic who has created its elegance?*

One of these two men was a preacher, and an ornament of the Methodist church, and if his whole household were gathered at one table, and shared in all the amenities of a simple yet refined family circle, he was careful that none were admitted to it who would endanger its purity by the shadow of vicious coarseness. The other was simply a fanatic, and goes for nothing, since fanaticism, like other insanities, teaches nothing except by its warnings. The good Shepherd, for that was his name as well as his vocation, practised the equality he preached, but even this high-minded exception to the general army of theorists did not, in his actual practice, put the rough, unhewn block in the place of the polished cornerstone. He did what all pretend a desire to do, yet few of us even attempt to perform in fact ; he gave, in every respect, due honor and fellowship to the honorable and worthy laborer. By this course of justice, respect and fellowship, the toiler is polished and elevated, and without asking any one to endure the companionship of vulgar, narrow-mindedness (though such often comes to our doors in carriages), it is in the power of every member of good society to help largely in this mission. Most of all, women may do much for our domestic

heathen by reserving and *using* for the bloated intemperance of the rich man, the careless scorn that now rains down discouragement and abasement upon the head of the man of toil. I only supplicate that worth and intelligence shall be honored wherever it is met ; that it shall have a welcome and courtesy wherever you are ; that it shall be held as ill-bred, as it certainly is unchristian, to affect a shallow contempt for the representative of any trade or calling, while the man is your equal in the gifts of heaven and in their proper cultivation. Let every just man and woman in the nation resolve to treat all the working people in their sphere of influence with the social distinction that his or her own conscience declares to be merited, and at once the whole national character will be ennobled, for man will outrank money. There are many who will meanly and timidly shrink from receiving in their drawing-rooms an able mechanic or a practical inventor perhaps, while they make haste to kiss the shoe-tie of any weak, idle, dissipated young *lord*, who has no merit on earth more than that some ancestor was a fortunate robber, or adroit court perjurer. But these are as unworthy of the imperial birth-right of an American citizen as they are in faith and practice unfit to sit at the table of Jesus of Nazareth. They are as deficient in the courage and dignity of republicans as they are in the loving-kindness of Christ.

PEONIZING A MOTHER.

A TALL, fine-looking woman, with every mark of gentle nurture that can be seen in any Mexican lady, came to ask a confidential interview. We conversed at length, and her grace, gentleness, and well-turned expressions left a deep impression on my feelings. This lady was the bond-servant of her son's widow, assigned to her with other portions of the

deceased husband's chattels as the widow's share of his property. This is the bitter feature of peon servitude; the most delicate white lady, the fairest child of promise may be dragged down to it on the first cloud of misfortune, and those of their own blood are often tempted by the facilities of the law to traffic in the bondage of their kinsmen.

Anita was the daughter of an old Spanish officer who died, sword in hand, in defending the cause of the crown against revolted Mexico. The orphan was protected, as were hundreds more of portionless girls, in a nunnery of San Luis, or Monterey, until a home was found for her, and she finally married a merchant of the place. When at his death his eldest son succeeded him in the business, it was discovered to be in a bad state, or at least so averred her son Don Blas, and on his proposal the family removed to one of the towns nearer the Bravo in order to be on the line of contraband trade. Here Doña Anita gave away her daughter in marriage, but only to see the fair young bride begin to wither and sink into the grave under the rule of a harsh, miserly, unloving husband. The unhappy mother received in her arms a helpless infant, the dying gift of her daughter, when she closed her eyes. Before this blow fell upon her, Don Blas, her now prosperous son, had also wedded the heiress of a wealthy ranchero, and on bringing home his wife he thought proper to come to a settlement with his mother.

It is among the curious inconsistencies of the Mexicans that while it is most uncommon for a child to treat a parent with unkindness or disrespect, it is not so uncommon to reduce them to bondage. Custom—in all lands, the law of laws—permits the one, but will not tolerate the other, and perhaps resting on this certainty of filial treatment, Anita made no opposition to being “accommodated” with her son. That is, she confessed before the Judge, that for her own and her daughter's

needful clothing—and the like matters—she was indebted to her son Blas, and consented to serve him in legal peonage for the debt. Don Blas permitted his peonized mother to bring home and nurse his sister's orphan, and when a year or two rolled on, and its brutal father took another wife of his own mould, there seemed no other refuge left open to the little Margarita. But when Don Blas died suddenly two years ago, the sky was again overcast. In the division of the estate the peonized Anita became the personal property of her daughter-in-law, and, in addition to a severe change in her own labors, she was told, first softly and indirectly, but at last with stern distinctness, that Margarita, now approaching her seventh year, must find a new home or be "accommodated" with a peon's bonds. The widowed, childless, heart-broken Anita resolved to come to me for aid. The unfeeling father of Margarita is now a ruined, dissipated wanderer—and rumor says a pitiless robber—about Mier, Comargo, and the towns on the lower Bravo. I was encumbered already with engagements beyond my strength, but it was hard to resist the modest yet urgent petition of this sorrowful woman. She only prayed to enter as a servant in mine, or if that could not be, any American family that would shelter her Margarita also, and bring her up in the enlightened customs of the free American. "Let me become your peon," she said, "and I will devote to your service my body and blood, but open your heart to this poor child." Oh, how eloquently did she plead for that helpless one!

I explained, what she partly knew, that she could not enslave herself to me, as it is a form of servitude not recognized by our laws; but that if she chose to remain on this side of the river, so that we could enforce her mistress to accept a just settlement of her debt, instead of the long-drawn-

out iniquity of two hundred dollars, my house was open to her, and we would see what could be done.

"But I have promised to return to my duties, (mis deberes,) if I cannot pay the whole *cuenta*."

"Then you have promised away every chance of liberty, for on neither side of the river can a person be found to advance this sum, even if they trusted, as I would like to do, to your remaining faithful to your new service," I was constrained to reply. I felt the necessity of this plain speaking, for it is a false charity to pay to any grasping master these exaggerated demands, and waste on one object that which, if properly applied, would open the prison doors of a dozen peon families. If they can get a just balance struck, and will keep this side of the river while they are paying it, half of the peons I know could, with reasonable help and countenance, work out their debt in a year.

"But tell me how you came to owe your son so large a sum," I continued.

"It was not a large sum, only twenty-seven dollars when my son 'accommodated' me."

"How then did it swell to two hundred, when you were working all the time?" I knew pretty well how it was done, but I wished to hear it from her own lips.

"By putting in my *cuenta* the sugar allowed for Margarita's atole, (meal porridge,) and the soap for our clothes, and a wool mattress to sleep on, and for meat, and medicine sometimes, and for all we wore, and for two blankets and some cotton for sheets," (sheets and a mattress are, by the way, most unpeon luxuries,) "and all this in nine years made a large *cuenta*."

"Then no clothing was given to you or the orphan without putting it in the *cuenta*?"

"Nothing, Señora; but then, on Sundays, and days of

permission, I embroidered for others, and earned a little money to buy things for Margarita. Embroidery and fine needle-work was my *destino*, (allotted occupation,) until lately. Since I have suffered much pain in my side, and feel an occasional cough, I have been taken from the needle and put to the *metate*, which is worse."

There was a gleam of explanation in this: her mistress' daughter saw the consumption was stealing upon the over-worked needle woman, and she was sent to the *metate*, or corn-grinder, to be tormented into finding another buyer before she grew altogether useless.

"I think such a daughter does not deserve that you should go back at all; but since you have given your faith, I see no other way," I was forced, most unwillingly, to reply.

The enslaved lady—for lady she was in every graceful word and gesture—left me with a slow, reluctant heart, to return to the house of bondage, and before a way could be devised to snatch her, and the child of her yearning love, from their chains, death, the pitying angel, unclosed her bonds. The young Margarita is now enslaved for the debt charged against her grandmother, and thus all that is left of a gallant Spanish name is brought within the inexorable abasement of peonage.

Theorize as you will, your own heart will rebel against your conclusions, if you affirm that slavery is not most grievous to a mind and spirit born and trained in the hopes and expansion of a better life. I turn back always in the comparison to these facts, and think that wiser pens should take up the text:—

Twelve millions of the Red Race have been degraded, and are dying off, by the slow poison of peonage, and no one consoles, no one instructs the feeble half that remains of the Native American stock. Less than half a million of stupid and

ferocious blacks, brought from Africa, have become three millions in number, and a vastly improved race, even in the worst of our slave States. Letters and the arts have been conferred on them, they have been aided to create a new and flourishing realm in their benighted fatherland, and emancipation hovers over them like a banner of promise. Colonization opens to them wealth, country, and distinction, and all Americans—except those who have some fanatical uses for them—cheer them helpfully on their way. Yet, this growing, thriving, hopeful black race, for whom reparation is shining out in every quarter; who have their rich ancestral continent for a home and heritage, finds a pitying orator on every political stump, while the half-slaughtered Red Race, to whom remains not home, refuge or country, meets no glance of sympathy or kindness.

Oh that a Presidential election could turn on some show of justice to the hunted Red man, what a plenitude of generous missions would put forth their blossoms! What a chant of tender sympathy would chorus through the land! What patterns of brotherly love we would all be—if it would elect a candidate—until after election!

DONA REFUGIA.

ANITA, the well-born and pure-blooded white lady, was not alone in this intense desire to rescue her child from the thralldom of ignorant peonage. Doña Refugia, the lovely widow of an officer in the Mexican army, requested me to receive herself and two children, a bright boy of fifteen, and a sprightly girl of twelve, in my family to do the work of the domestic servants. She stipulated that the work should be done, and well done, but for the honor of her husband's name she would expect the children and herself should be treated as of the family. This, too, I had to decline, for I

could not, in any case, displace those who were tried and faithful in their duties ; yet, when I heard, six months after, that evil tongues were busy with the fame of this still young and beautiful woman, I was fearful that I had fallen short of what might have been done to shield and sustain a lonely, unprotected woman.

Both these cases were of white women cradled in prosperity and nurtured in elegance, but among the Indians, backward and reserved as they are, we discover rich veins of ambition, whenever they are encouraged to unfold, or rather to form, hopes of a manlier destiny than peonage. This is what people deny of the Red Race ; but have these loud-voiced skeptics ever made the trial ? My own experience is not extensive, it only amounts to the study of those who have come in contact with me as our own servants, those of our friends, and the Mexicans we encounter in travel. Yet it is sufficient for my conviction that the Indian is more susceptible to mental effort than the African. I have had failures, and I have had success, with both in my limited range, but the most cheering success has certainly been with the Red Race. Two young girls, one a mulatto, the other a pure Indian, applied to me to teach them to read. They had an idea that a book was a mystery they could soon unlock, if one who had the key would show them the way. It was a sad interruption to my idle ways, but they were so anxious to learn, that I received them into my house, to the great discomposure of my new handmaiden Jesusa. There was a pretence of assisting her with the needle, but she declared ~~they~~ only plagued her to death. In about two months they began to read, and understand something of what they read, when my patience gave way, and they both were sent home, prepared to forget—or improve as might chance—all they had learned. A friend said, the mulatto would soon dismiss all thought of

the matter, while the Indian would retain, if no more, all she had acquired, with the usual tenacity of her race, and so indeed it proved. I have sometimes seen this exactly reversed, yet in ranging back over my field of observation, the balance is largely in favor of the Indian capacity.

AFRICANS AND INDIANS.

So while we are ranging the world to find something as bad as our Southern slavery, we utterly forget that Mexico, with one third of the population of the United States, has more millions of bondsmen than we possess. Of the **two** classes, the Africans are infinitely the best cared for in the matter of physical comforts, and are the **least** crushed by the deep and hopeless sense of unjust degradation. While the Indian pines away in sadness and discontent, the Black laughs cheerily through his existence. His light heart is free from those biting traditions of a nobler state which haunt the fallen white and the enslaved Red man. How many white men there are in the bonds of vice, who sleep every night in the mire of abasement, and wake every morning under the goad of that hard task-master Want—a task-master who spares his serfs as little, and who drives them, as the statistics of civilization show, to miserable graves, much faster than the slave and peon owners do theirs—we will not compute, but when money and emancipationists are busy in “freedom’s cause,” they should not be forgotten. There is much hereditary bondage in this class of bondsmen. Tens of thousands of children are cast upon earth by this army of intemperate and vicious parents, to be trampled upon and crushed into early graves by the hurrying feet of their Christian brethren. No one expects those who are rushing on in the monomania of some one-ideal benevolence to turn from their path to Africa, Ceylon, or China, to raise up the dying little heathen in their

own streets, but surely there should be a juster distribution of alms when *sane* Christians convene in the temple of truth.

When I venture thus to petition that the infant heirs of white degradation, and the helpless children of Indian bondage, should share in the magnificent outpourings of emancipating love, let it not be perverted into a wish to deprive the exiled African of his portion of sympathy. We owe him—and in the march of the age it will come to him—instruction, freedom, and a home in the land of his fathers. This, too, we owe to the plundered, exiled, and half-slaughtered Indian. Out of the imperial realms and countless treasures we have robbed from him, give him back a little corner for home and shelter, a small mite to feed and comfort the feeble remnant that remains to him. Let the annuities which he is now encouraged to squander in spirituous poisons, be used to reconvert him to a man. So, too, of the African. The sums that are lavished upon two or three doubtful individuals ~~would~~, if used with a broader wisdom, build up a town of ~~fine~~ and pleasant homes, and convey to them the parents of a new life and freedom-giving colony. It is well to liberate one African slave; it is better to raise a hundred to the elevation of self-government, and make of them a beacon-light before the race.

Here on the Mexican frontier we can see in its broadest lights and shadows, the course of these unprepared, undisciplined races, when left to themselves. Here, the hundreds of runaway slaves, who are tempted to escape from Texas into Mexico, have all the social rights and honors of the most esteemed citizens. His joyous hilarity is a welcome relief to the serious Mexicans, he is at once accepted as a favorite, an equal, and there is no impediment to his popularity or success, and yet by far ~~the~~ greater number soon get “accommodated” with peon bonds. Many, however, of the young

men of mixed blood, who have been well-trained perhaps, in the household of their masters, settle themselves advantageously, marry in the best families, and carry their honors with high dignity. They are a most jocund, generous, forgiving race, and many amusing stories are told of their ways.

THE COLORED DON.

AN American of my acquaintance was travelling in Mexico, and as he was walking one fine evening, in the city of Monterey, his eye was attracted by the comfortable, self-satisfied air of a gentleman, slowly walking down the street towards him, swinging as he went an enormous key. A second look convinced him that this portly key-holder was the runaway cook of a friend in southern Texas, so he accosted him with, "Ah, Dan, is that you?"

"Don Dionisio de Echavaria, if you please, sir," said the cidevant Dan, with a courtly bow, recognizing at the same time the stranger.

"Well, Don Dionisio be it then," said the accommodating traveller. "But how did you come by such a fine name, Señor Don?"

"Oh, I did my father-in-law, the judge, the honor to adopt his, as mine did not suit me. It was only fit for a plantation nigger," said Don Dionisio, with an air of ineffable disgust.

"But what in the name of wonder are you doing with that ponderous key, Don Dionisio? You are not the keeper of the city prison, are you?"

"No, it is the key of my warehouse," said the Don, with dignity,—his warehouse was garnished with about ten dollars' worth of soap, candles, sugar, and cigaritos, be it observed.—"I cannot find a confidential clerk among these lazy

Mexicans," continued the magistrate's son-in-law, "and I am obliged to take in my own charge the key."

"You want a clerk, Dan—I beg pardon, Don Dionisio?" inquired the traveller, with a serious face. "Well, suppose you take me? But, first, what about the treatment and salary?"

"As to the salary," said Don Dionisio, a little disconcerted, "we must talk of that afterwards, when we see how you answer, but as for the treatment, upon the honor of a gentleman, you shall fare like myself, with a place at my own table. My lady will receive you as if you were my own brother."

"Excellent, I will see you to-morrow, Dan—ten thousand pardons—Don Dionisio, but if I should not conclude to stay here, have you no message to send to your old home?"

"Give my respects to the old gentleman, my uncle," (so it pleased the Don to designate his former master,) "and tell them all that if they come this way my house is open to them. But how is my old friend, Gen. H.?"

"Very well, indeed, and he has become as steady as a church."

"I am very glad to hear it. I used to be ashamed of his company, sometimes, but if he is so much improved, I would like to take him by the hand."

"I thank you in his name. Good bye." And so they parted, not to meet again; but this colored man, with all his little harmless pomposity, has more than once rendered kind and efficient service to Americans.

There are not many colored persons, however, who prosper in this stricken and paralyzed country; it only yields its latent treasures to the energetic and intelligent grasp of the white man. Yet this equality of caste and color is a great allurements to the Africans on her border, and it is also the absolute guarantee against a hasty consummation of that

dreaded annexation—and the still more awful chimera of **Slavery Extension**—which, like the black shadow on the Hartz mountains, overshadows and terrifies so many believing spirits.

INDIAN FORAYS.

SOME idea of the make and character of the country must be borne in mind, in order to understand the entire absence of system and forecast in the arrangements for border defence. The Indians have no longer homes or families in the wide band of unsettled country that borders the whole length of the navigable current of the Rio Bravo down to its mouth—for Laredo and the few towns that at far intervals dot the lower part of its course have no settlements back of them—and all this range of a thousand miles in length, from the coast back, is a field for their sudden forays. They pour down from their distant fastnesses, far beyond Eagle Pass, in parties of from a dozen up to some hundred warriors, mounted on the fleetest of their desert steeds, and free from every incumbrance but their light trappings for war or the chase. They had been driven by the Texans beyond this region, as a place of encampment with their women and children, before the annexation, and only revisit it at intervals to plunder and destroy the Texan settlers. The old Texan style of border defence was exceedingly simple and effectual. They gathered at the first note of danger—for every colonist had something dear to protect, and no means of protection except what lay in his own stout arm and sure rifle—and they all went on the trail of the savage with the single and direct intent to exterminate him wherever found. As the outer edge of settlements pressed deeper and deeper into the wilderness, and their herds and flocks—the chief wealth of these frontier farms—

multiplied around them, they became a perpetual fountain of supply to these roving Indians. They rush down so suddenly upon their prey, and disappear with it so rapidly, that it requires an alert, light-armed, experienced woodsman, like themselves, to pursue them with any hope of success. Judge, then, of the sagacity of the Solomons at Washington in sending infantry to suppress these wild horsemen of the wilderness! On one occasion they made such havoc of life and property all around the towns and posts low down the river, that the commanding officer sent forth detachments in *wagons* in the hope of cutting off some of their scattering parties, and rescuing the women and children the savages had captured. It was a forlorn hope; but what brave and feeling man could omit to do whatever he could, however faint the probability in its favor, to save a score of helpless beings from such a fate? If his efforts were insufficient, let the blame rest with those who were so reckless of border wants as to provide no better means for its defence. Unless the Indians were polite enough to come up to the soldiers' muskets and ask to be shot, I do not see how infantry were to hurt them. With a suitable mounted force to range along the line and interpose an ever vigilant barrier to incursive parties, an adequate infantry force to maintain the fixed posts that flanked their operations would be of effective service. Rangers are best for out-service, for scout and pursuit, for courier and escort necessities, and for whatever offers in which quick action in the wilderness is the thing most specially desirable, but in posts of concentration and supply, the order and discipline of the regular army becomes of great value. The more so, as on a frontier line delicate cases of international right and courtesy will occur, in which the authority and responsibility of the officer commanding on our side should be of the best recognized character.

In whom, then, lies this default of fit and adequate protection for this blood-stained frontier? Is it in Congress, in not providing the means; or in the Cabinet, in not using them with sounder wisdom? The useless, and forever useless, ship-of-war Pennsylvania, has cost more money than is needed to open and defend a mail route from the Gulf to California, and such a route would soon dot its whole course with a line of settlements competent for their own protection.

WILD CAT'S POLICY.

THE Mexican authorities found no impediments in the way of making a firm treaty of alliance with the Seminoles. A beautiful location about thirty miles above Eagle Pass was assigned to his people, after converting them one and all into full and entire citizens of the "golden republic," by a quick, simple, and satisfactory process of naturalization rather peculiar to Mexico. Even the black slaves among them—and Wild Cat himself owns several—were "accommodated" to the Mexican system of servitude under all the necessary legal forms, though a very old woman among them told me the only difference she ever found between being a slave and a peon, was in the harder way they had of grinding corn in Mexico, and that meat seemed scarcer. The Chief, and his cousin, the Bear, were made Judge and Sheriff of the new municipality. Wild Cat also took rank and pay,—or the promise thereof—as an officer of the Mexican army; so, as the colonel and magistrate of a *partido* of the Mexican republic, he had a double stake in its glory. Nevertheless, whether by force of habit or sound judgment, his predilections were evidently with the Americans. He kept his hunting camp as near our settlement as he could, ranged in amity the passes that covered it, and in many ways was a willing and useful guard

against the too near approaches of the common foe, the savage Camanches.

One fine morning Wild Cat drew up unexpectedly at our door, with only his two interpreters and an inferior servant in attendance—a small and confidential train for a chief who delights to ride forth with a strong display of armed warriors and captive servants. It was a quiet business call, but bore as plainly and distinctly on the great plan of his life, as these dark untrusting Indians ever show forth their thoughts. He wishes to become the accepted soldier and agent of the United States, and win renown and influence by taming down the hostile and troublesome border Indians to keep peace with the whites. To do this, and become in our eyes and theirs the foremost man of the Red Race, it is as necessary to chastise and subdue the refractory as it is to win over and harmonize the willing tribes. He had but lately returned from one of those long and inexplicable trips, which unquestionably have reference to the grand object of his ambition, and he looks wearied and care-worn. His dress was unusually plain and travel-soiled, and altogether there was something exceedingly stern and unsatisfied in his air; but it might be only that he was not well content with the summons from his military superior which he met on his arrival home. His orders were peremptory, to muster all his followers and allies, and move with all his force down the river to attack the insurgent—Carvajal.

At the first glance, Wild Cat might have passed for a white borderer arrayed for a long hunting expedition, but a second look revealed many little Indian peculiarities. He wore a shirt of blue printed cotton, and overalls of deerskin, dressed to a dark color, and fringed neatly down the seams—probably the work of that favorite wife, whose name he suffers no one to pronounce but himself, and who is only spoken of in the tribe

as the Chief's Companion. A crescent-shaped silver medal decorated his breast, and a collar of gay bead-work encircled his neck. All the party wore turbans of bright-colored kerchiefs wreathed around their brows, in a style that would sit with legitimate grace on the brow of an Arab. And strange to say, one of his interpreters was an Arab. He was a tall, stately, self-possessed being, with the aquiline features and round glittering eye of the desert-born. They called him a Moor, but he was really an Arab, from the Asiatic side of the Red Sea. He had been decoyed on board a Spanish trader, and borne away to slavery in Cuba. He was in Cuba long enough to acquire so much Spanish as served to make him a fair interpreter for the Seminole chiefs, when he escaped across the dividing straits and sought a refuge among the Florida Indians. The other interpreter was our famous Gopher John, a full-blooded negro, whose immediate parents were from Africa. John, or as the Lipans call him, "Laughing Dog," is, in all his ways, true to the records of three thousand years of dependent servitude. He is pliant, docile, heedless of race or nationality, and only intent to serve his chief in the way he is most pleased to be served, yet no coward withal, and as generous and light-hearted as he is thoughtless of the future. The Arab, on the contrary, bore himself as if he felt the pride of his ancient nobility of thirty-five centuries of warlike self-sovereignty could not be torn from him by any mortal robber. As they placed themselves by the side of the Indian chief it was impossible not to be struck with the remarkable coincidence. Here, on this remote frontier line, the types of the three races of men so hardly pressed by the relentless, all-grasping whites, were confronted by one of the conquering race, and on a mission, too, that had its rise in, and avouched for, his supremacy. In that small room plundered Asia, enslaved Africa, and mar-

tyred America, were each represented in blood, in character, and in suffering by a lineal son; and to make the meeting as complete as it was extraordinary, the fourth man of this singular convocation was of that haughty Norman stock which for a thousand years has filled or shaken the thrones of Europe, and which erases, with the point of the sword, the laws of every nation it enters, to write its own in their stead.

Yet these four men never thought of it at all, or only thought of it as an inevitable and irresistible destiny, as they calmly discussed how best to subdue the restless Indian tribes who still roam at will in what we have left them of their ancient heritage; how to quell the fierce insubordinates, who are so slow to learn that the whites have a stronger title than themselves to the huntings-grounds of their fathers; how to save from utter destruction those who had been subdued, and were willing to live in peaceful submission if the United States would but secure to them a City of Refuge. It is to be regretted for the Red man's sake, as well as our own, that we cannot give permanent homes, present support, and eventual civilization, to the suffering and friendly tribes on the frontier, and particularly to Wild Cat and his band. It is entirely in the power of our Government to make this able chief an instrument for good or evil service, for his restless ambition and versatile talents *must* be employed, and in his fate and plans there is now a pause for breath and decision which a bold, prompt policy, would not fail to seize and turn to the right account. Shall this untamed tiger of the desert make his spring on us, or on the savage tribes? They are his enemies as they are ours, and if we but give him easy scope and fair encouragement, he will bound on them teeth and claws. His pride of rule and his savage fame are the breath of his life. He lives but to win command, and would freely die to his death chant, that he was the highest chief

of a hundred tribes. If the whites will open to him a pathway to renown by sending him against the hostile tribes, he will do their work better than half a dozen regiments. If they shut the door upon him, then he will continue his plans of combination, and strive to pour out upon this border a fiery torrent of desolation. Eagle Pass nestles safely in its nook, and has less to fear than the richer settlements that spur out and fringe the edge of the cultivated country, but nowhere are flocks and herds secure in an open district of one hundred and fifty miles wide by fifteen hundred long on this frontier. Yet Wild Cat, with a regiment of dragoons and a company or two of mounted Texan riflemen, would sweep this region clean in a year, and leave it as dainty and secure as the Capitol grounds.

SLAUGHTERED HERDS.

At the call of his commanding officer the Seminole chief withdrew from our range and went down the country to take the part that became a Mexican dignitary of his rank, in the war against Carvajal. Some of the Americans call it "Carvajal's calico war," the question in issue being, as they averred, whether he should pay, or escape paying, the duties on sundry bales of cotton goods. It may be so, for it too often happens with Mexican revolutions and American elections, that the spoils is the only principle at stake, and in proportion to *their* value is the vehemence of the contest. The Camanches conduct their wars on the same plan, only that they are too ignorant to dress up their motives with such fine words and plausible excuses as we do, and in sheer poverty of speech they are forced to tell out the story and say their object is plunder, their excuse hunger and necessity. We have driven them back, and farther back, from the rich pastures and wooded

vales of their old inheritance, and when the grass fails in the stony defiles and parched mountain sides of their barren land of refuge, they *must* pour down upon us who have possessed ourselves of their ancient camp fires, and filled their hunting grounds with our herds,

“And from the robber rend the prey.”

We who represent the victorious and usurping race, must, as heirs and sharers in the common deed, take with it our portion of the consequences. We must have the justice to feed and civilize ~~these~~ famishing outlaws, or we must have the hardihood to exterminate them. In recording some little of the blood-thirsty work they perpetrated all around us, I must also record my painful conviction that, according to their light and the measure of their provocations, their sin of blood is not so heavy as ours. Out of the millions upon millions of revenue derived from the domain we rifled from them under the plea—which would be valid enough if we urged it more honestly—that we give it to humanity and civilization, how many Indians have we rescued from barbarism? how many dollars have we expended to fit them for or place them in Christian homes? We have professed to make treaties and pay the Red man with Pharisee exactitude, the full price and value of his destroyed independence—but in what wholesome coin? Powder and rum—murder and suicide—this is what enlightened Christianity gives him back for the matchless empire bequeathed to him by a long line of the free lords of the forest.

We all need Christian instruction, whether in the city or wilderness, but most out here. We have had but one visit from a clergyman in two years, and the devoted Odin, bishop of Texas, made a long and trying journey to see us, and if possible, open a way for a church and school at Eagle Pass.

He dwelt much on this rule, "Do unto others even as ye would have others do unto you." This was a part of his teachings, but it is strange doctrine, and would be a curiously perplexing practice for American Christians. It may be a line stolen from some old pagan after all, for Bishop Odin is a Catholic, and Catholics are said to be idolaters; and taking unfair advantage of our great distance from proper instruction, they have passed it off on our innocence as a Christian precept. If it is in the sacred writings, it is to be feared that our Cabinet never read the Bible.

After Wild Cat and his rangers departed the hostile Indians pressed closer down to our homesteads, and I was forced to narrow down to closer limits my free and delightful rides over the wild and boundless prairie. It spoiled their zest, when the order to saddle my pony inevitably brought with it the rattle of preparation for armed attendance and a close scrutiny into the health of six-shooters.

Yet all this taught me to confide in my household. There was not a coward in it, not even my coquettish young maid Jesusa, who had set our combustible-hearted Victor distracted, and made a bashful lamb of our sedate and dignified mayor-domo, Reyna. One day, in the temporary absence of my husband, we were all collected on the highest part of the house, to watch the antics of a party of Indians, on the opposite bank of the river. They had rained down suddenly, from no one knew where, on the rancho of Don Felipe Garcia, and appeared to enjoy amazingly the pastime of lancing some of his finest cows, that, unluckily for themselves and their master, happened to be in the *corral*. There would be no end to the confusion such a scene would create in a New England family, fresh from the calm shadow of the village church; there was not a troubled eye or quivering lip in the whole of that attentive circle. Mexicans, of the peon class, are neglected

children, and often behave badly in a strait from want of self-confidence or good leaders, but cowards they are not. I have always found them collected and resolute, and in this case, being willing to try—for on the frontier it imports one to know—the mettle of our servants, I asked Guillermo, the mason, and the oldest of them, if he did not think it would be well to arm our men and go to the aid of Don Felipe's rancheros.

"If you command it we are ready, señora," was the cool and prompt reply. I remained a little longer, and when I went down ~~they~~ were all getting their guns loaded; for, with thoroughly Indian improvidence, these Mexicans, who are rarely without a gun about them, almost never have it ready for use. In this is the vast superiority of the American over the Mexican frontiersman: his horse and his arms are the best he can get, and he attends to their condition with vigilant care. He feels that he is ready to fight or flee to the best advantage; and is conscious that the wild Indian knows him for a strong and watchful adversary—and this alone makes odds in his favor. Thus the small American population of Eagle Pass, and the reputation of a United States post at Fort Duncan, commanded a distance and respect from the hostile Indians, which its actual strength by no means entitled it to, and which the same force of Mexicans would not inspire. Whether the Indians on the opposite bank were moved by any consideration of the presence of the two or three houses on our side, or whether they refrained in pure good nature from further mischief, they confined, on that occasion, their slaughter to the cattle, and retired before we had decided that it was necessary or advisable to interfere, and for some time we heard no more of Indian depredations.

The inquiry naturally and necessarily occurs to every one who knows we devote twenty millions a-year to the military

and naval service, "Why is not the force at Fort Duncan called out to drive back to their hills these marauding Indians?" But, if it has not been said before, we will say now—or if it has been said, it is still worth repeating—that there is no effective force at Fort Duncan, not even enough for escort duty. There is something like thirty infantry soldiers, on an average, for garrison duty, and if four or five of them were detailed—which is the most that could be spared, unless the ladies of Eagle Pass were to charge themselves with the care of the post in the absence of its regular defenders—to go in pursuit of the Indians, they would have to go on foot. The unpolished savages never take the trouble to wait long for such visitors; and unless they did wait for them with exemplary patience, how is a squad of infantry to overtake well-mounted Indians?

In the month of December, 1851; not less than six or seven hundred head of horses, stolen from Mexico, were passed over the Bravo, within a dozen miles of Fort Duncan. The Mexican losers will say there were as many thousands, and demand indemnity for them from our government; and some member of the Cabinet will consider the law, the percentage, and the Galphin precedent, and arrange a draft on the treasury. Don Juan Fernandez, who brought over a herd of three hundred head of fine cattle to place them under the protection of our flag and the military post of Fort Duncan, was informed, early in December, that a band of Indians, with a large train of horses, were crossing the Bravo in the direction of his herd. Information was sent to the fort, but there were no horses to make pursuit. Don Juan then took the trail, with one American gentleman, and traced their crossing place and line of march before he slept. After ascertaining that our shepherd's corral had escaped their notice, the two gentlemen camped there for the night, and re-

sumed the trail with the dawning. A few miles on they came upon the night-fires—not yet cold—of the Indians; and there, in every direction, Don Juan found his cattle lying about, perforated with lances and arrows. While he was counting them, and noting how many, or if all, bore his brand, he heard the drums of Fort Duncan beat their morning call. A day or two after, we rode down to look at this field of wanton slaughter. In every direction there were dark path-like streaks of dried blood, where the poor animals, maddened with the pain of the arrows that were sent tearing and quivering through them in ferocious pastime, had rushed hither and thither through the chapparal, until they fell down in the death agony. I picked up some arrows, feathered in three colors, and fashioned so as to indicate the tribe, and kept them—a lasting memento of the wise distribution of our means of border defence. A Comanche warrior will send one of those arrows through a horse, and with little less precision and force than a rifle ball. They had taken their own time and way with Don Juan's herds; and, as he rightly thought, and all of us well knew, this destruction of his property was owing to the unpardonable ignorance or neglect of our officials somewhere: he laid his case before the Senate, and demanded some notice of the state of this suffering border. There is no excuse for this; there is the will and the means on the part of the people of the United States to protect efficiently this whole line, but their servants will not be vigilant in their duty. They do not inform themselves sufficiently at Washington of the nature and resources of the country, and are generally ignorant, to an incredible extent, of the data on which to found any system of border defence, and consequently none exists. This seems an incredible summing up of all the expenditure and parade of our frontier establishment; but it is unhappily strictly, unde-

niably, and disgracefully true, that on the Rio Bravo frontier there is no systematic plan of defence—none whatever. Supplies “wander about indefinitely,” as the Texans used to say of General Houston’s administration. Posts are scattered in aimless confusion, where chance or the caprice of an officer placed them, without suitable connection of mutual support, without communication with the sea, generally strongest where there is nothing to defend, and always weakest where the most is in peril.

LYNCH LAW.

THERE is one feature of border life which never fails to strike with horror those who live calmly and securely under the genial protection of a well-established community. I mean that state of things in which, in the absence or nullity of the legal machinery of justice, society—feeble, crude and suspicious—returns to the first elements, and makes itself law-giver, judge, and whatever else it deems essential to its safety. It is the stern primary law of self-preservation—this border custom of bringing criminals before the whole body of citizens for judgment—from which men sitting beside law-guarded hearths recoil in dismay, and hearing only its cruel side, stigmatize as the utterly unpardonable Lynch Law. Most true it is, that nothing but urgent and deplorable necessity will drive a just and merciful man to participate in its tribunals, but it is not less true that in frontier settlements, if the fear of its quick vengeance did not overawe the wicked, the innocent and peaceful would be in hourly danger of wrong and outrage. We have escaped—partly through the near presence of Fort Duncan, but more through the orderly character of our settlers—the terrible example of a court of lynchers, yet I trembled not long since at the ominous sha-

dow of such a proceeding. Happily, the accused man proved to be innocent, and the guilty one fled these precincts. Since then formal writs of election have been issued, and in the regular course we are supplied with a magistrate.

We had already witnessed (or rather suspected) a strong case of individual retribution, the irregular personal vindication, by the sufferer, of that wild justice of redress that every human bosom believes in, and nourishes, until it is taught to forgive by religion, or to wait for revenge by the law. This individual action of revenge is a step—a long and dangerous step—worse than Lynch law, just as lynching judgments are a step worse than the guarded measures of strictly legal vengeance. The one-man court, the settlers' court, and the sacred, decorous, law-attended court of the well-regulated community, have each a certain currency and respect in border opinion, as the inevitable, incurable, and not altogether dissimilar flaws in the cement of society.

But before I give the examples which kept step together, of illegal individual retribution and of legal justice, I will take time to relate how near circumstantial evidence came to bring a Lynch verdict on the head of an innocent stranger.

THE FOOT-PRINTS.

We had working at the quarry a tall, stupid, heavy-eyed peon, who had been whipped and starved by his master until the whole powers of his mind and body had concentrated down into one idea—that of saying “yes” to every requirement, possible or impossible, that was propounded to him—and one capacity—eating the whole day long. “Carlos would eat up the *Carcel*, locks, masonry and roof,” his companions said, and that was the reason he was never imprisoned in it by his master, who exhausted his ingenuity to tor-

ment the wretched slave into searching up a new home. Poor Carlos had not the wit to do that; but he made out to run away at the instigation of a cunning, unprincipled fellow-peon, who delighted in the not very apposite name of *Santo de Dios* (Holy of God). How Santo stirred such a lump of apathy into this decided action, is really a marvel, and the instigator was not so far from the mark, perhaps, when he slyly said, "It was the smell of the American kitchens that drew him along." Carlos was a slow and inefficient worker, and his friend Santo was the mirror of laziness, so the heaviest end of the duty fell upon a strong, hardy German who worked with them, and amused himself all day with abusing his co-workers, and wound off at night by recapitulating all their shortcomings to their employer. Santo de Dios had a flippant fluency of argument, and while they were occupied with these wrangles, silent Carlos would devour the best part of their supper, and then as silently digest it under the stormy wrath of the German. Some way this came about so often that a feeling against Carlos, as an unfair dealer, was general, and between the attacks of the German and the almost desertion of Santo, he became the incessant target of the whole corps; and although he never replied, except by a meek assent, to all they chose to make him endure, at last he found his situation intolerable. His old master, on learning that his escaped serf was making good wages on the safe side of the Bravo, had addressed himself in such a way to the fears or conscience of Carlos, as to obtain from him a promise to give him one half of his earnings. When Carlos applied for an advance for this purpose, his account was carefully read to him, and he saw it was already overdrawn; for he came so miserably destitute that every needful article, from his shoes to a blanket for his sleep, had to be supplied as soon as he was taken into employment. One of the most discouraging ob-

stacles to those who would fain raise the standard of peon existence, is in their childish distrusts and their uncertain faith. Their whole practical knowledge is of wrong, deceit and oppression, and anything else is to these heirs of suffering an unknown tongue, a doubtful land. Carlos had not the head to decipher either. He was alarmed to find himself in debt to his new master, while his old one was yet full of terrors. At the break of day he had attempted to recross the river and fly into his own country, but the Bravo had risen in the night, and the Eagle's Ford was impassable. With not a little surprise we heard that he had been watched, pursued, and brought back by Baptiste, on a charge of stealing, before we suspected his departure.

Wet, frightened and confused, he appeared, in the stalwart grasp of the inflexible borderer, the very picture of forlorn guilt. Baptiste, now occupied in building him a neat dwelling-house in the place of his first grotto-like quarters, had, from time to time, lost flour and other matters—in the line of food principally—which his limited house-room compelled him to leave in the gallery or shed outside. His suspicions fell on Carlos, who was always cooking and eating at night, and on the preceding evening he almost caught him in the act. He saw a figure stealing down into our camp of laborers, just at moon-set, and from the broken glimpse among the mesquites and mulberries, he thought the stature above that of any other of the Mexicans. He "would not come down and disturb the lady by a night-row," he said, "but he took his marks and kept watch." The track from the flour-barrel was of large heavy boots, "rights and lefts," and on one the heel was missing. This mark he had noted before, but only the day before had found that it was Carlos alone whose large-sized boots would correspond with the track, and that one of them, also, lacked a heel. The secret and unaccountable at-

tempt of Carlos to leave the place, which Baptiste had intercepted, was another feature against him, and the blundering confusion of his statements made it darker every moment. With regretful yet resolute faces the employers and head masons drew together, to consult upon what example should be made in the absence of legal means of the first convicted criminal of Eagle Pass. But, first, it is the custom for the judges in such case to review carefully the circumstances, and examine for themselves, and in a body, all the minutiae of evidence. The tracks were first examined, and the keen eye of a frontiersman caught the fact, that although of the same size, the lost heel of Carlos did not correspond with the track left by the thief. One was on the left, the other on the right foot, and then Baptiste himself frankly observed the impressions were deeper than Carlos usually made.

"Where is the Dutchman?" exclaimed some one, suspicion now turning, for the first time, in the correct channel. He had been a cool spectator until the self-constituted judges started to make what may be called a judicial survey of the foot-prints, and then he all at once became invisible. How he managed to get away from the settlement without being observed by any one was a puzzle to all of us, for it must be borne in mind that he had no horse, and our nearest American neighbor was seventy miles off, at the post on the Leona, and between us—and for hundreds of miles up and down the Bravo—there was nothing but uninhabited prairies roamed by hostile Indians. It was never known what became of him, but with the best that could happen the miserable man paid a heavy atonement for his fault. Yet, the question may well be asked, what other line of self-protection is open to these isolated frontier settlements?

Carlos was so used to cruelty and injustice, that he could scarcely believe in his entire acquittal under such a close chain

of suspicious circumstances ; and there is no doubt that men have been brought to the gallows by more incomplete circumstantial evidence. He was sent to get a warm breakfast, and dry clothes, and then questioned about his sudden and stealthy attempt to run away. With long and patient cross-examination, we came at last to the reasons, and at the same time to a new argument, in favor of his honesty. Stolid and unfeeling as he appeared, the gibes of his companions had goaded him past endurance, yet he did not "desire to bring them under castigation," as he expressed it, by complaining to their common employer, and therefore he resolved to return and throw himself on the mercy of his old master ; but knowing himself in arrears, he gave his new *fresada*, or blanket, which was all he had for coat or bedding, to the faithless Santo de Dios, who promised him to settle up his account. But for his summary arrest and acquittal, no one concerned would ever have heard of this arrangement, for he trusted to a brittle reed in Santo ; however, all was made right now, and he carried home with him—for go he must and would—his *fresada*. The rush of events among the Americans was perfectly overwhelming to his stunned faculties, and it was doubtless a relief to get back to the regular whippings and stated rations of his former home.

MEXICAN PEONS.

WITH Carlos we dismissed his chief tormentors, Victoriano and Pedro Chico, and his untrustworthy friend Santo de Dios. They heard in silence the serious decree of banishment—for to them it was serious—but it is a rare and stern misfortune indeed that wrings a Mexican from his impassible self-control. Yet, on the least occasion, they will pour out a mellifluous tide of five-syllabled words that would overwhelm, drown,

and bury fathoms deep in its insignificance, an average Congressional speech. It is the universal characteristic of the Indian race, and the natural eloquence of the Red Man is wonderfully aided and enhanced by the noble grace of the matchless Spanish language. Here were a band of common untaught laborers brought up in every respect, but hard work, like their wild Indian brothers, unseen and unseeing of more than half a ray of civilization, yet when they make their *Adios* every sonorous word and sentence rings with courtly pretension. Queen Victoria's retiring cabinet cannot profess their loyal devotion in finer phrase—nor perhaps with more insincerity—for these docile and over-respectful peons are too hardly treated to be reliably honest. They are crushed and plundered until they are driven to rob their robbers in self-defence; but they do cheat you with such infinite courtesy; they explain away their little depredations in such graceful and resounding Johnsonians, that one feels it is almost impertinent to name such trifles amid so much fine talk. Our curt, plain-spoken Americans find their deeds so much inferior to their words—for it would not be easy to keep up with such magnificent holdings forth—that there is a disposition to judge the Mexicans with severity and to deal with them beyond the law. This is not Christian charity. They have the faults inevitable to their position. For them there is no standing ground left for public virtue or private independence. The soil has been torn from them by the great landholders who monopolize what should support a thousand prosperous and instructed families, for the pasture of as many head of cattle and horses, and the homeless peon must starve or tend the rich man's herds at his own price. Schools are beyond his reach, and the law doles out to him the solaces of religion at exorbitant prices. Homeless, untaught, and oppressed, he sinks into sullen despair or desperately rushes

into crime ; and when the most daring deeds of robbery and murder have rendered his own country unsafe for him, he crosses the Bravo, and probably pursues his career at the expense of our herds and horses, until he is caught in the fact and handed over to the verdict of Lynch law.

THE ONE MAN COURT.

THE tendency of individual man to enforce for himself the retribution when the law is too negligent or too feeble to exact it from the wrong-doer, has been fearfully illustrated of late at Fort Duncan.

Two Germans enlisted and served together in the United States forces at that post. Whether they were united by near ties of kindred or only attached and faithful friends, they were noticed by their fellow soldiers for that deep, silent, unchanging constancy of brotherhood of which we see so many remarkable instances among the children of the Rhine. Alone in a new country, and in the midst of strangers and an unfamiliar tongue, they kept apart from others without offence, and lived by themselves in the language and memories of the beloved fatherland. It happened, for their misfortune, that there was in the same service a riotous and ill-tempered man, noted for his quarrelsome, abusive habits, and boastful of his former deeds of bloodshed. He was one of those beasts of prey, whose wild tusks and dangerous claws a well-organized society would cut off while they were tender, or enclose in strong walls, until he learned better uses for their energies. One day, while roaming about the camp in an irritable mood, he encountered one of these unoffending Germans, and in his frenzy cut him down with a mortal wound. His horror-struck companion never left his side during his lingering death agony, and when all was over attended the last rites with

such silent composure of sorrow as surprised the company. Some said this speechless grief was the more bitter, and argued all the worse for the murderer, Fay.

The brutal assassin was kept chained in the guard-house two or three months, awaiting the action of the civil authorities. They were a hundred and fifty miles off at San Antonio, and as their county jail was already overburdened with criminals, they were in no hurry to claim the gift in store for them at Fort Duncan. The officers there grew tired at last of keeping guard over a ward that seemed to belong to no one, and between hands Fay found himself on the outside of his prison. He was seen hovering about the limits of the camp during the next day, and then he totally disappeared.

Two months or more had passed when Juan, the *techedor*, or chief thatcher at Eagle Pass, was out in search of grass proper for roofing, and he encountered in a thicket, scarcely a league from the fort, the body of a man. The limbs were composed, and a cloth thrown over the face, not for concealment, for there was no show of such a thought, but as if in a sort of respect to the helpless remains of mortality. Yet the hand that paid this reverence to the dead had, beyond doubt, sent a ball through the brain of the living man. The dead man was buried as he lay, without farther care or question, by throwing a few shovels of earth over him. Those who went to see the corse on Juan's report, thought they recognized in the dry, discolored object before them, the victim of a just atonement in the person of the murderer, Fay, and suspected, without blaming him, the murdered man's friend. He had exacted for himself that retribution which society had omitted, though it usually assumes the right of vengeance as a collective duty and benefit. No one chose to press inquiry, and the secret sleeps undisturbed in the shallow grave of him who has thus met the law of "blood for blood."

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THE other was a case of collective retribution, of regular legal vengeance, although the crime and the punishment were of a milder hue. It is true the culprit would have been hanged in the navy—the poor seaman Jackson *was* hanged in the bay of Vera Cruz for such an offence—but in this instance the accused had the advantage of judges more disposed to show lenity than to exact the fulness of the law.

A non-commissioned officer, of generally prudent habits and fair reputation, who has served the United States some ten or fifteen years to the satisfaction of his superiors, went over to that den of wickedness, the military colony on the Mexican side of the river, to buy some little comforts for his family. While there, he drank some of the abominable brandy of the country, and whether it was drugged or only the natural poison of the liquid, it completely unsettled the reason of the unfortunate man. His companion was surprised at his wild conduct, and tried to quiet him, but he only became more turbulent, and finally made an onslaught on a Mexican woman who came in his way. Just at this moment the surgeon of the post came by, and, surprised at the violent and unusual conduct of Brown, he interfered to save the woman and bring the maniac to his senses. In doing this, the officer received a blow, but as he settled the account fully on the spot, and saw as well that Brown was under evil influences, he was not anxious to make the matter worse for the offender than it already stood. This forbearing wish, however, was destined to have no effect; Brown's infraction of discipline became known, and the army code made it indispensable to call him before a court-martial. The man of many murders went forth free, but he who in blind madness raised his hand against an officer could not escape

punishment. The least that could be done was to convene a court-martial; the least a court-martial could do, with proper regard to the preservation of order and obedience, was to destroy his prospects, and the hopes of his family. There was no disposition to exaggerate his offence or its punishment. As kindly and merciful men as we have in the army sat in judgment upon him, with the sincere wish to soften the rigors of military law as much as they could, consistently with military discipline, but the necessities of discipline set narrow and well-guarded limitations to mercy. They laid upon him the lightest penalties of martial law. They only confiscated his arrears of pay, the savings of many weary months, and his bounty land. This was the end of the devotion to his country, of one-third of his years of manhood—to be driven from the camp with ignominy, and forfeit the homestead land promised by the country to her faithful soldiers. This was the gentlest fine that could be taken for an hour's madness, and a blow that hurt nobody. The officer that received it would have been well pleased if the exigencies of the service had permitted this act of insubordination to pass by in silence, for in restraining the man's insane folly, he had been forced then and there to inflict upon him some decisive chastisement. This poor, dismissed, ruined man would call his sentence severe, perhaps unjustly severe, for his fault, yet he was spared the lash, he was spared a degrading confinement in chains, for his term of service had nearly expired; and let it be said clearly, and at once, that the whole tenor of the military command at Fort Duncan has been eminently kind, equitable, and considerate towards the soldiers, and the fault lies in the sordid manner in which the United States pays its defenders. It is not to be expected that a high grade of *men* can be hired for peon's pay and treatment, and the law is shaped for the government

of such as it expects to get at such wages. I only cite this case to show that men in all circumstances must and will find—or make—such rules of retributive justice as they believe necessary to the occasion.

THE COMMUNITY COURT.

THE wild verdicts borderers sometimes enact, in the faith that they are just and needful, sound uncouthly to those fenced round with regular courts, and must seem dreadful to Christian men accustomed to the solemn decorum with which constituted courts deal out their legal awards of chains, lashes, and hangings; yet, seen close at hand, with a knowledge of the situation of the community, and of the life and deeds of the evil-doer, many of Judge Lynch's verdicts will appear more just and necessary than half of the sentences of the regular courts. Let some Samaritan, thrice armed with patience, and imbued to the uttermost with an innocent faith in the wisdom and necessity of our existing laws, search out the data, and he will find that we have not one ship of war afloat that is not stained with more blood, "on slight pretences shed," than he can verify in the entire annals of American lynching. There are a dozen ships in our navy, aye, a round score of them, without counting the Somers infamy, that have witnessed in almost any one of their long cruises, more undeserved tortures, and more lives let out through them, than has ever been perpetrated in all the Lynch courts of the wildest of our frontier States. I am no apologist for Lynch law, and trust it has run its race; yet even its brutal blood-thirstiness is as often "a social necessity"—as the gallows party term their altar of civilization—as the legalized cord. Until universal instruction and universal employment work out their mission, crime will follow tempta-

tion, and punishment pursue crime. They are the inseparable furies of classic fable.

A lawless Ishmaelite, that some older society has neglected, trampled upon and cast from its bosom, rushes into a remote settlement burning with a feeling of war with all his race. This community, planted by itself at a long distance from legal succor, becomes from the necessities of its position its own Church and State. If it finds in its midst a murderer or a thief, it deals with the outlaw as seems to it best for its own peace and security. Statute law is but the formal expression of what the larger community deems wisest and most just for the general welfare; the small, crude, remote settlement does the same for itself, only without writing down its enactments, and in the more summary way enforced by its peculiar situation. It has no prison houses in which to detain a criminal, no courts in which to try him, no funds wherewith to support him in long duress. If a crime is committed the accused has the whole community for judges and jury, and if he is found guilty by common suffrage they proceed to execute the verdict. Instead of sending him for ten years to a penitentiary, where he will receive uncounted lashes, when and how it may please a warden as brutal as himself perhaps, they tie him to the most convenient tree and have out the whole cup of vengeance at once. They are not prepared to sip it sweetly under law-sanction for years onward, and must have it in one draught or remit it altogether.

A man in north-eastern Texas had an amiable habit of biting and pinching his wife—just for his own independent amusement—whenever he came home drunk, and that happened about weekly. The helpless wife, the sickly mother of a young family, had no choice but to endure these cruelties, for he had brought her a long fourteen hundred miles from her friends on the Schuylkill, and there was no asylum

open to her little ones. For their sake she bore these wrongs ; for their sake she swallowed her tears and dragged her bruised limbs through her incessant daily toil, while the master of her person varied the delights of his cards and cup with the music of her agony. The wife dared not, could not, repel the ill-treatment of her tyrant, but the community resolved to protect its abused member, and in full assemblage it fixed upon the chastisement proper to the offender. One hundred lashes was the fine imposed by this impromptu common law, and his own cart happened to come best to hand for its execution. He was bound to it by twenty volunteer sheriffs, while his wife in vain implored for him the mercy he had never extended to her, and the fine was promptly and duly exacted. It was not a tithe of the physical suffering he had imposed on the feeble frame of the woman who had left behind all other life to share his lot, but nothing was said of his crime when the press caught up and bruited the punishment as an evidence of the "horrid license of the Lynch Code." In the State they came from it was cited as an example of the barbarous manners of Texas, yet in that same pattern State the law had permitted this John Smith to squander his wife's little inheritance of three thousand dollars, against her will and entreaties, and leave her and her babes without a shelter. It permitted the rum-seller to seize the household goods she had acquired by her industry, and sanctioned her husband sending to auction the trifling gear the law exempts for the pressing needs of a family. The law and custom made him so inexorably her master, that, on his promise of better temperance, she was fain to forgive him all this and follow him to Ohio, where her brother had bequeathed her an interest in the proceeds of some land. This money enabled him to drag her, sorely against her health and her wishes, to Arkansas—where he began his habit of personal abuse—and thence to

Texas. Here the free grant of land to settlers gave her a home at last, and the law of homestead exemption made it safe to her children. Lynch law effectually frightened him into better behavior—for the brutal coward who can raise his hand against a woman is exactly of the mould to yield to fear and brute force—and fenced around by loving children in a secure home, she is to-day a prosperous woman.

THE BORDER NEED.

HAPPILY, Eagle Pass has now outgrown the danger of Lynch tribunals. We have, with most other appliances of civilization, a precinct organization and a competent local magistrate to deal with offenders—if offences come—and to marry if any are anxious to be bound. The Padres of the nearest Mexican towns can be called to the aid of the sinful and suffering—if the fees are ready—and happily, the general health of the country renders less important the absence of a physician. With half a dozen stores above and below Fort Duncan, and a fair tale of laborers, (I wish I could say artisans, but we have them not,) there is not a doctor of law, of medicine, or of divinity, among our citizens. Law-suits and sectarian controversies have not taken root as yet, and nobody seems to suffer in mind, body, or estate, in our happy and quiet corner. The tone of society is quiet and kindly, because its members are principally of the best grade of morals and intelligence, and because there are not so many ladies here, that they can afford to break up into little rival coteries. We have, all told, about a dozen, and we can't well subdivide them into many classes. There is, in means, manners, education, and social rank, a most happy equality. Not one is in anything particularly favored above her peers, and not one is below the standard average of an American lady. Neither

are there salient advantages in the position of any one husband to elevate his wife to the rank of lady patroness, unless we were to concede it to the commanding Colonel's amiable lady, and she would never accept the honor. We have no bickerings for precedence therefore, and would have to make an occasion, since none exists, if we were bent on finding any one to put to slight. As this harmonious state seems in flat contradiction to the inexorable laws of village existence, and must, of necessity, be a transient phenomenon, I hasten to put it on record, while the unique fact is still a living truth. It ought to embalm the name of Eagle Pass in the history of womankind forever.

Yet, we have here a wide untrodden field for high effort. Science and mechanical skill have vast mines of wealth to explore, for, to a known certainty, rich mineral stores exist untouched, within an easy and profit-ensuring distance of the navigable current of the Bravo. But capital and combined industry is the key to the noble resources sleeping in this vast valley. Association, the association of capital, science and labor, in honorable fraternity, is to be the "open sesame" of this central heart of our continent. No immense sums of money, no large bodies of laborers are needed, but in sufficient and compact force they must come, if they would disinter these treasures. Still a greater need, still a higher duty calls the Christian pastor to this vineyard.

Canting, sectarian bigots, who would shut the gates of heaven to every soul who did not go there upon their special endorsement, are not the men for this duty. The self-righteous Pharisees, whom our Divine Teacher rebuked daily for their strictness in dogmas, and uncharitableness in deeds, still hold the chief seats in many of our polished synagogues, and there let them stay; but give us, and still more give to the neglected, untaught, despoiled Red Race, the gentle,

guileless, and forbearing disciple of Him who placed the kind and practical Samaritan above the formal and self-righteous Levite. There is an oppressed remnant to be saved, there is a wandering and benighted people to be redeemed, and surely the will must exist where the power is so ample for this work of salvation. Ask not in what mode, or by what sectarian name, the forlorn and friendless exile is conducted to the altar of the living God, so that his understanding is raised, and his heart opened to know and feel the redeeming truths of Christianity. Give the outcast a home, and in the genial glow of its calm sympathies teach him to labor, for this is the saving probation allotted to man: to love his kind, and to reverence God by obeying his commandments, for this is the teaching of the Prince of Peace, of him who condemned forms and phylacteries when charity did not reign therein. To do this, the Indians must be gathered into communities and made to realize the tender relations of peaceful family life. The school-book and the Bible must keep step together, the plough and the reaping-hook must work *for* them until their young children have learned to value and live *by* them. The Church must be planted amid the fields and orchards of a settled and permanent civilization, to perform its whole mission. The government can give a home, build quarters, assign rations, and gather into regular communities, many of the tribes, directly under its jurisdiction, with half the money squandered upon them in rum-paid annuities. Surely, if it can afford to expend so much in making this unhappy race like the beasts that perish, it could find the way, if it had the will, to instruct and civilize them into men.

In these communities, while the old and stubborn were held in peaceful submission, the young could be trained to habits of civilized industry, and their children again would rise still higher, and be good citizens and Christian examples.

The noblest possible missionary effort would be the establishment of an industrial school, for the instruction of the bright and well-endowed Mexican youth, who, under a benign and steady guidance, could be modelled into teachers for their savage kindred. Ten thousand dollars would found on this border such a self-supporting, agricultural, and mechanical missionary school. The suitable land waits the acceptance of the fathers in Israel, who will undertake the arduous yet delightful task of laying the first corner-stone for the social and moral redemption of the Red Race.

PLEASANT DISCOVERIES

In the mouth of babes and women we often find the wisdom which we have sought in vain from the elaborate reports of high-titled officials. There are millions of acres of United States domain that no one cares to buy, because it is only grazing land, and even so, but thin pasture, which want nothing but a free application of that fertilizing absorbent, ground gypsum, to bring to immediate profit. A wide region on the Bravo is in the same position. I was convinced by certain indications that we were not far from a plenteous supply of this redeeming gift, and I inquired for it diligently from those whose duty it was to know, but the nearest answer I could ever get was from Harry Love, who brought me some fine specimens of alabaster from the extreme navigable head of the river.

One day I was admiring the pure and pearly whiteness of the walls in the house of an industrious and enterprising woman on the Mexican side—so active and resolute, indeed, as to inspire a sort of dislike among her slow-going countrymen, for with her own hands she helped to build and plaster her house—and I added, they had the marble finish of plas-

ter of Paris. "And they are of that material," was the prompt reply.

"My little son and I gathered and broke the rock at the river side, and my daughters ground it into meal on the *metate* and boiled it. A Frenchman who was sick at my house explained to me the way to utilize this abundant white rock, and here it is, as you see, the work of my own hands."

This is the contagious influence of American enterprise, which Guadalupe caught up at San Antonio, where she lived awhile, and engrafted on the stubborn stock of her native Indian patience. This border could be made to bear much of this hardy fruit with a small outlay of kind and unselfish justice.

Her son, and as it chanced, my ever active young henchman, Pablito, were by, listening with grave wonder to my minute queries as to the whereabouts and probable extent of the gypsum bed, and although they could not see why any one should take so much interest in such dry matters, it inspired them with a project to give me pleasure.

A few days after, some clear and handsome blocks of gypsum were presented to me in modest triumph, with a very exact account of how and where they were to be found in profusion. With some hesitation, and with a sly look to catch whether he had not done a foolish thing, a clear, smooth piece of fine potter's clay was also drawn out of its hiding-place.

"Where did this come from?" I asked in pleased surprise.

"Oh, there is a hill of this two or three miles from the Escondida."

"But how came you to think of going to find it?" I inquired.

"My lady wanted something better than lime to plaster

her new stone house," said Pablito modestly, "and I thought of this, for I heard Don Fernando say that the stone buildings at La Fiesta, ~~which~~ have been abandoned twenty years on account of the ~~Indians~~, were plastered with it, and the coating is perfectly sound and beautiful to-day."

"So boys and women bring us the treasures which men—wise in their own conceit—pretend do not exist. Well, my boy, I think we must teach you what there is in books, and send you out to look for mines."

"If my lady will give me permission," and here Pablito stopped in some confusion, as if he feared he was transgressing all bounds.

"What permission do you desire? Speak frankly, you know me to be still more your friend than your mistress. Be assured that I am disposed to gratify you in all that is for your own good, Pablito."

"If such a thing would please you; if you would permit your horses to go," stammered out the boy, "there is another of your faithful servants who would go with your poor Pablito and bring you some silver from a mine in the mountains."

"Silver from a mine in the mountains, my lad! how do you know of such a mine?" I inquired with interest.

"We have both seen it. I noticed it when the Indians carried me there a captive, and your herdsman saw it, also, once, when he was ranging for some strayed horses," replied the boy, gathering confidence from my interested manner.

"Then it is not far from here?"

"It is, we both think, ten or twelve leagues (thirty miles perhaps) from the river, at the nearest point."

"But why do you think this mine is silver? We know there is lead at about that distance, and in the direction you indicate, but we are not certain of silver."

"Because it is so bright and hard to melt," said he, promptly. "The Indians stopped to eat and drink at a spring near it, and they made bullets of it, but bits of it did not melt at all."

"Since at least two of our people knew of this mine, why have you kept silence on it so many months?"

The child hesitated a moment, but his attachment prevailed over his Indian instinct of caution, and he gave, as I have no doubt, the true answer. The locality was dangerous to visit, and they were not disposed to be sent to it, for the benefit of any stranger, the less as in no event—so say the elders of their race, and so says history—had a mine ever proved a blessing to an Indian.

"Yet you are willing, and so you say is the herdsman, to tell me of this, and even to risk going for some of the metal."

"Señora," said the boy almost solemnly, "you are teaching us both to read, which will make us American citizens, you know, and mines are a blessing to Americans and to every nation but Indians. Therefore, when my namesake was sick, and he was kept in your house to be cured and you gave him a book, we said we would lay before you this secret."

"So you have told no one else your ideas, and only me now because you are to be Indian peons no more, but Americans?"

"That is it precisely, and if it pleases you and the Holy Virgin, we are ready to go when you command and bring you plenty of this lead-silver from the mine."

"Is there much of it?" I asked among fifty other questions.

"There is bands and snakes of it" (these are his literal words rendered in English), "looking out and creeping along the slopes of a long steep valley. These must be more than would load a thousand mules."

Thus in one week I had from the hands of ignorant children, what has led us to sure evidence of the existence of two valuable minerals within an easy reach of our village, and of a third—a fine coal bed—I knew before.

In taking the necessary steps to secure the property of Pablito's silver mine, we became thoroughly convinced that it is a rich deposit of argentiferous galena, and without any obligation to the hollow display of government explorations, which thus far have produced nothing but doubt and discouragement; the women and children offered to Eagle Pass at least, two important aids to its prosperity, in gypsum and porcelain clay, and without counting the coal we may find another not less—it cannot be more—important, in the silver mines in the Lunita hills.

OUR MINERAL EMPIRE.

FROM the borders of the great Lakes to the shores of the Pacific, from the copper cliffs of Superior to the sparkling sands of California, stretches a broad mineral zone, across the entire breadth of the continent at its widest point. Even under the developments of its crude infancy, the extent, value and variety of its productions, baffle the boldest calculators, and none may presume to compute the highest capabilities of this vast mineral empire. Coal, Iron, Copper, Lead, or Gold, in the abundance with which various States are crowned, would either of them have been esteemed a kingdom's boast and wealth in the Old World, and taken together, even in this great Republic, they must immediately rank as an extensive and distinct National interest. Like the Commercial, the Manufacturing, the Southern and the Northern Agricultural interests, Mining will make its own separate and magnificent contribution to the National wealth, and, like each of them, demand

the guardian and impartial care of the National Legislation. Asking no favoritism and needing no exclusive fosterage, it will demand that the settlements it creates, and the roads to them, shall be duly protected, and that mail and other intercommunication shall not be omitted; in brief, that its Territorial minority and the independent rights of its majority shall receive the care and respect corresponding to its weight and importance in the Union.

As if to chain with links of eternal strength all the members of the Union in one unbreakable circle, this mineral zone bands the continent at the head and confluence of all the great arteries. The Lakes carry its various tributes to the Atlantic, or circulate them as required among the Grain States. The Missouri—though that section is hardly in its dawn—the Upper Mississippi and the Ohio each bring rich tidings of ore-abounding regions. The Rio Bravo del Norte indents the land of Silver, and, with the rivers last named, offers an open highway from the Mining regions to the Mexican Gulf. The Gila carries its golden sands to the Gulf of California, and the Sacramento pours her shining freights into the Pacific Ocean. Thus this magic belt of ore land, sweeping from the far North-East to the extreme West, finds its outlets in every sea that bounds the continent, and gathering up and interlocking in her bosom the sources of our mightiest watercourses, she will allow no mad fanaticism to rend them asunder, and divorce the river's outlet from the parent fountain. The Mining Country buys of all and sells to all, and therefore it has a direct and pressing interest in keeping the peace among the confederated sisters of the Union. And when she is older, she *will* enforce more sensible ways.

Among the last *known*, and least heard of in the list of mining sections, is that on and west of the Upper Rio Grande. There is no more doubt of the overflowing riches of the Silver

regions in this direction than of the *placers* of California, but hitherto it has been a sealed book to the white race. There was no highway to it known except by a difficult land route, swarming with Indian enemies, and the task of shortening it by better surveys and more efficient defences, has gone on but tardily until now. The Treaty with Mexico opened to us the peaceful exploration of the Rio Grande, and it is now ascertained that steamers can ascend to the gates of the mining country. When steamers come Indians disappear, and the frontier is safe for settlement.

Harry Love reports but one obstacle—the Island Rapida near Presidio de Rio Grande—and that obstacle is easy of remedy, and then there is a thousand miles of navigation. This covers that long range of frontier with the cheap and effective defence of a few economical steamers, and unlocks to us the Silver mines on its higher sources. Sante Fé and California are brought a thousand miles nearer to the navigation this side of their sierras by these late explorations, and only two broken links—Nebraska and Centralia—are to be made whole to unite this Mineral Region in a connected chain from the Pacific to the Atlantic and the Northern Lakes. The unexplored Centralia between the Gila and Colorado of the West, will yet unite California and Northern Texas—the Pacific and the Gulf—in close embrace. If Nebraska is also endowed with like Mineral gifts, as there are indications, they are linked to Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin and the Lakes in a continuous line, which again descends the Lakes and radiates to the Atlantic through the Coal and Iron States.

This line discloses almost every mineral known to Commerce and the Arts, and as the Mining interest will help to employ and make more productive all our other National interests, they are all interested in clearing the path and protecting the operations of the profitable buyer and seller.

NAVIGATING THE BRAVO.

SOME wiseacres of our day are as positively certain that the Rio Grande is not navigable, as their learned prototypes of Salamanca were in their day, that there was no land for Columbus to find on the unknown side of the Atlantic. When it is navigated, as it can and must be, many hundred miles above *their* "utmost limits of possible navigation," they will be as much puzzled to understand the feat as the persecutors of Galileo were to comprehend the "impossible" possibility of the earth moving round the sun. These positive gentlemen have not yet even learned the name of the river on whose capabilities they pronounce, for the most part, on hearsay. They use the old Spanish term of description of "Rio Grande del Norte,"—the Great River of the North,—or simply the Rio Grande, the Great River, applied to it by the inhabitants on or near it, to distinguish it from the smaller streams—its tributaries. In the earlier reports on this river, some of these scholarly writers talked of the River "Rio" Grande and the River Rio del Norte, taking in their untaught innocence the Spanish for river, "*rio*," as a part of its proper name. BRAVO is the proper name of this stream, and the English prefix of "river" would be more suitable than the Spanish word "*rio*," in a national document of record in our own tongue.

It is rather much to say that the river is not navigable, when, of the only three efforts to test this, every one was successful. These three efforts were made in common boats, at diverse seasons, without any preliminary knowledge of the current or its various difficulties, and without the force or means to remove the slightest impediments in the bed of the river. The first boat, the Harry Love, came up to Eagle Pass

and Fort Duncan, and reported the Rapids of The Isleta (or Kingsbury's Falls) as the only important obstruction. The boat's crew, however, took her through these rapids, and where that can be done, a strong, suitably constructed, iron steamer could force its way when a channel is cleared. To place on unanswerable ground the facility of conquering this "impassable barrier to navigation," the official report of a competent engineer, which has been on record in the War Department already nearly two years without action, states unequivocally that a channel can be made for a small steamer for fifty thousand dollars. Contractors could probably be found who would give bonds to the United States to execute the work for one hundred thousand dollars, and if so, it would open to steam navigation one thousand miles of this boundary river. The boats would be small, but they could carry each a gun or two, and transport troops with activity from point to point, to meet, drive back, and effectually overawe, the wandering tribes of savages who now baffle and set at derision our slow, and always after-time, pursuits.

The second boat was the "Maj. Babbett," a keel boat fifty feet long, sixteen wide, and drawing eighteen inches water. In this Capt. Love ascended the river one thousand miles, and to within two hundred of El Paso, finding as before the principal, if not the only important obstruction, at the rapids at Kingsbury's Falls, through which the boat was warped by her crew. The last exploration was made by Lieutenants Smith and Mechler, who went up from the mouth of the river to about one hundred miles above the mouth of the Pecos, and this at the very lowest stage of water. Their report I have not seen, but their trip confirms the feasibility of the Bravo to light draught steamers, since they actually navigated it at the worst season up to the very gates of the sil-

ver region, and through the range of Indian infested country, in which even the smallest steamers would be the most efficient of all defences.

Before the government or any of its servants ventures to abandon the protection of the frontier, let one hundred thousand dollars be placed at the disposal of the Secretary of War (provided he is not infected with Galphinism), for the purpose of opening the channel of the river, and, if it can be done, we have trebled the hopes and security, and cleared away the worst impediments, of the frontier settlements. How any practical man dare, or can, set his private interests and opinions against such a national necessity as the navigation of the Bravo to its utmost capacity, would be a marvel, if we had not so many official shortcomings to take the edge off our astonishment.

THE TRUE SOUTHERN SYSTEM.

LET the South look to her interest and her laurels, for there is that ripening on this border which concerns them nearly. A new republic is rising on this side of the Sierra Madre, and she will bring no mean baptismal offering to the altar of freedom. I do not speak of that phantom giant, "Slavery Extension," which troubles so keenly all the unbalanced wits in that extensive and interesting region designated in our political charts, as the State of Buncombe. Wherever our bird of power flies, wherever our stars shine, there is increase of light and liberty. The States of Northern Mexico will do much for human amelioration, in the change in the peon system, inevitable to a state of closer relationship with us; but the return she will make is apart from all slave questions. Through this region, west of the Bravo, now in the act of secession, lies one of the great continental highways that should

span the Union. It is second only to the supremely important route of Tehuantepec, and of both the South would hold the outward gate, the genial and honored warder of the general interests of this arm of our entire commercial greatness. From about the outlet of the Red River, on to the Father of Waters, draw a line to the head of navigation of the Bravo, and thence continue this line to the confluence of the Gila and the Colorado of the West, and you have the shortest, most feasible, and, both practically and commercially, the most desirable land route to California. With all the materials, if it were necessary to construct them there, even to the copper for the boilers, and the iron for the rails, as well as the coal to work them on the line, this is the most inviting path for the national railway to the Pacific States. It will pay dividends,—and, after all, the certainty of this is the soundest and discreetest guarantee for enterprise,—sooner than any other of the much discussed routes. It cuts through the rich heart of a paying country.

The line from the mouth, or thereabouts, of the Red River to the Bravo will intersect, in succession, very nearly the head of navigation of the Trinity, Brazos and Colorado—not to speak of some valuable minor streams—and crosses the whole breadth of Texas just where the general-lay of the country is most favorable to such constructions, and where the amount, wealth, and enterprise of the population, would come forward most powerfully in its aid. Each of the principal rivers of Texas would be an auxiliary duct of trade, and all they drew away from the main trunk, to their respective gulf ports, would be made up by the more impetuous circulation of the whole round of business. The State of Texas might invest a permanent fund for the support of her domestic Government, in this section of a highway, that must make her the thoroughfare of this immense national communication

for, besides at once enhancing the value of Texas property to the full amount of her outlay, it would bring in a secure annual per centage to relieve her tax-payers. Louisiana could scarcely fail to bring up her section to the Sabine, for the same reasons; it would pay dividends to her capitalists, increase vastly her taxable property, and draw to her emporium a direct emigration from Europe. Emigration and direct trade are two mighty levers of prosperity. This direct trade and emigration from Europe is one of those needs of the South, to which she has been hitherto over careless, and it is now all the more seriously her duty to open and defend those great avenues that lie within her guard. Three of these arteries of national life now solicit her attention, and the meanest of the three enfolds wherewith to make even a poor State powerful and respected by her confederated sisters.

The Arkansas route, from the head of navigation, through Utah, to California and Oregon, should find its sea mart at New Orleans, and its early and thorough survey should be pressed by every patriotic statesman, regardless of sectional prejudices.

The Red River and Texas route belts a more southern, populous and accessible region, and would interlace with the Arkansas route, by means of the higher waters of the Red River.

The Tehuantepec, or sea route, need not now be dwelt upon, but it closely twines its important bearings with the other two, and, together, they make what may well be termed THE GREAT SOUTHERN SYSTEM OF UNION.

To pursue this with efficiency, brings us back to a missing, though attainable link. From the Mississippi and Red River to the Bravo, is an open, known, practicable and alluring section of this circle of national highway; but between the Bravo and the California line, intervenes a confused space of

foreign obstructions. Precisely here begins, then, one of the high duties which the South owes to herself and the Union. The right of way should be pressed, insisted upon, and *obtained*. Ask it *now*, of this Government, that professes to rule Mexico, and take no rest or pause until this path is safely our own. Our cabinet should not permit—it should not be permitted a nay—either for Tehuantepec, or the Northern land line. They are national necessities, and at any price, they must be made secure, and if the President is true to his duty, they will be made secure.

In this northern route, in ample and generous concessions of way, lies the first love-offering of the seceding Mexican States. That which we should make haste to demand of Mexico, the embryo northern Republic will soon make haste to proffer, as the seal of a sincere amity—together with such other advantages of intercourse as will gladden Northern manufacturers, and make, as it should, all the Union partners in the gain.

This triple band of national highways lies the second time in the grasp of the South. Will she arise in her wisdom, and make the whole family of her Northern sisters her contented debtors, by adopting, cherishing, and maturing, in generous rivalry, a Southern system—a system which, without arrogance or selfishness, may be nobly national?

Let Louisiana lead heartily in this, as becomes the elder and more experienced sister, and be certain that astute, keen-eyed Texas and golden California, will answer with ready voice. Let every Senator, whose heart's truth keeps time with his tongue's loud profession of devotion to the Union—and the whole Union—give his hand to this work, at Washington, and in another year Europe will bow her weary head and retire from the contest. With twenty States on her old Atlantic realm, it was more than difficult; but with another

ten, belting, in mighty array, their own steam-defended inland sea, and stretching to the Pacific, in one continuous and invincible line, she could but retire, and leave the matchless Union victor of undisputed sway—mistress of this continent—guardian of the Atlantic—arbitress of the Pacific—protectress of the Gulf and its cluster of inland gems! The seal of all this is the vigorous circulation of the blood of the Union, from ocean to ocean,—and this is now the pressing and particular—though I fear much neglected—care and the duty of Southern statesmen.

GALPHINISM.

SPEAKING of the corruption of Mexican officials, it may be well enough to give here a slight idea of an affair, in which high members of our own Cabinet are by no means exempt from suspicions of partnership. For myself, I do not hesitate to say that enough has fallen under my own observation, to leave an indelible conviction that there are high accomplices at Washington, in a fraudulent, but plausible scheme, to plunder the United States Treasury of several millions of dollars. It will be led off by one of the ablest and largest of the landholders of Northern Mexico, who expects the lion's share of the prey. Señor Sanchez owns tract after tract, and all the laborers thereon, in such long succession, that one may travel three hundred miles on the route from San Juan de Sabinas to Saltillo, and in all that way find no commodity for man or beast except on his ranchos. In that long line of untaxed land monopoly and unrelenting peonage, there is no family that does not live in daily terror of Indians and no less brutal Mexican robbers, and scarcely one family—no, *not* one—that enjoys the comforts of bed, board, and shelter, as amply as they are habitually provided for the inmates

of the New York alms-houses. Where the impoverished and trembling inhabitants are not gathered in their comfortable Pueblos, there is nothing but desert fields, and here and there a few half-starved peons to look after the enormous, uncounted herds of wild cattle that swarm on these wastes. Over this immense wilderness Don Jacobo Sanchez is the supreme lord. He is church and state, and his decrees, issued from his luxurious abode in Mexico, come undisputed and undisputable as fate. Only in this is he paying the penalty with the rest of his class, in leaving this fair region a wilderness for the abode of cattle and peons, instead of making it the home of *men*; the soil has no defenders, and the Indians are more the masters of these vast estates than Don Jacobo himself. The tithes which he will not give to humanity and civilization, for the creation of a free and soil-defending population of homestead owners, the savages have taken from him sevenfold. How many ages will it take us to learn that nothing is so unprofitable as avarice—nothing so uncomfortable as selfishness? Of course, Don Jacobo's servants cannot know with certainty how many horses, cows and sheep are destroyed in these forays during the year; but their lord is an acute reckoner, and he takes care not to let his accounts suffer by under estimates, as he expects to be paid all his losses at his own enumeration and at his own prices, by our credulous people. He has also had several peons killed by the Indians, and many more have fled from their ration of a peck of corn a week, and whipping at discretion, to our side of the Bravo. These will likely figure on the list as "mules, or beasts of burden," and that without making any ungenerous subtractions from their money value. Even these peons, and other live stock which he has sold from time to time off his property, will not fail to appear, so runs the voice, in his catalogue of the lost; and not a hoof or horn of them will

lack full and complete authentication, under the sign-manual of his true and faithful servants. Oaths are not much dearer in Mexico than in certain courts of the Empire City.

By the treaty with Mexico, the United States were bound to protect the frontier, but if that is stretched to defend all the interior towns of Mexico, which their own government abandons to Indian ravages, we must double our standing army, and increase our military expenditures five or six millions a year. It would be cheaper to take or to buy the country at once.

If speculators are to cipher up such claims, and Galphinize them out of the treasury, a round ten millions will not end these "indemnities for Indian depredations."

Señor Sanchez, enlightened by certain late proceedings, will give a pair of influential senators an interest in his claim; and, I think, with the aid of a clairvoyant or a spiritual medium, we could indicate the precise gentlemen. This by way of beginning; next he must give a counsel fee of five or ten thousand dollars to an experienced lawyer who has enlarged and purified his legal wisdom by a seat in the Cabinet, and then the end will be in sight. We are a little curious to know who in the Cabinet has been, or will be, the recipient of the great Sanchez fee; or whether it will be tendered instead to a son, brother, or partner of a Cabinet member. It will require brilliant legal talent, and most able management, to get up a plausible showing for such an interpretation of the treaty, (for most assuredly a fair construction will never justify these claims,) and Señor Sanchez can well afford to pay a tenth—say a hundred thousand dollars—to the genius who is able to convince the Cabinet of the justness, and Congress of the expediency, of such a payment.

Mr. Fillmore has been urged by a—doubtless disinterested—member of his Cabinet, to propose giving six millions of

dollars for a discharge from this class of claims. No man would have dared propose such an unjust levy on the public funds to one of our earlier Presidents, and Mr. Fillmore rejected the idea as they would have done, but one who ought to know, says, that he will be "argued into opening the question with Mexico, and when the wedge is entered, the work will soon be done." Yet to our border citizens, not one mounted regiment can be afforded for a thousand miles of river frontier. We do not ask indemnity for our slaughtered herds, but those whose fault it is shall not escape their proper share of the responsibility.

THE CRISIS.

YET, if we are approximating to the "Reign of Spoils," under which Mexico lies prostrate and bleeding, Northern Mexico is slowly, but certainly taking the inoculation of practical self-government from us; and, as it gains upon her, the worst features of her social system will be reformed with their constitution. The first great convulsion at the capital will rend asunder the ill-adjusted confederacy, and erect the northern states of Mexico into an independent republic.

The whole country this side of the Sierra Madre is inexorable in its contempt and detestation of the Central Government. A few of the richest and most corrupt of the priesthood, a few more of the great landholders, maintain from interested motives their attachment to the soldier-despotism of Mexico; the priests because their exorbitant fees are secured to them by the laws, natural to this unholy union of Church and State, and because they are upheld in their luxurious and riotous debaucheries by their equally corrupt military compeers; the landholders because it is the stay of their grinding peon system, the most debasing servitude on this

continent, and more cruelly enforced on the four or five millions of Indians than our hereditary system of bondage can be made to bear on the Africans; the enormous untaxed land-monopoly, which enables the owner of two or three hundred square miles to dictate the terms on which the homeless, starving poor man may toil out his life, and which reduces the laborer to sell out his blood and sinews, his mortal life and his immortal hopes, for the meanest shelter and the scantiest pittance which will hold their existence together. Noble Brotherhood of the Union! well did a gifted member of your glorious order say of corrupt governments: "*As Freedom, Home, and Instruction make the sublime trinity of political good, so is Servitude, Destitution and Ignorance the evil trinity of political debasement.*"

Each order of the Mexican state, as it now exists, is eager to sustain the dominion of the evil trinity. They are the pillars of this temple of wrong, now tottering to its foundation. The military power quells liberty and helps the profligate priest to stifle expansion, while the merciless and all-powerful landlord starves and beats the very desire for better things out of his dispirited serf. We need not go to Asia to find suffering heathen; we have five millions at our very door, and what is written in black letters against us—loud-voiced, self-praisers that we are—is that we have just taken eighteen millions from the industry of our own honest toilers to supply their tyrants with more scourges and stronger chains. We knew when we were paying all these millions to the Mexican generals that every dollar would be expended to the hurt of the oppressed workingmen of Mexico, yet we had the audacity to demand that all the world should sing pæans to our magnanimity. In this our hypocrisy was yet more superlative than our absurdity.

But the time has come at last in which the evil is becom-

ing its own cautery. The rich are alarmed at the anarchy and insecurity of property; the better class of priests are startled at the frightful indifference of the masses to the rites of the church, caused by their being sold at prices above the common reach; the soldiers find themselves hated and ill-paid, and there is no remedy but in a war where they will become necessary; the suffering people want something different from their present oppressions, and all demand *change*. With all this there needs but a leader; a man of name and ability who will put himself in the field, and promise them security, trade, and *no soldiers*. They are narrow and incomplete in their wishes, but so far as they can see there is a unanimous will for revolution. A rumor, a faith, an expectation that Arista will be driven from the capital by his and their old enemies, pervades the air. No one can tell why he is so thoroughly confident that President Arista will come across the mountains in deadly feud with the plundering faction that has its nest in the city of Mexico, and take the captainship of the new Republic this side of the Sierra Madre, yet everybody seems to wait for that event as if it were the appointed signal for decisive measures. When you hear of a revolution in Mexico, you may prepare to celebrate the birth of another nation.

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